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THE MARVELLOUS IN MALORY

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by

Ellen Linn Lash

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OF
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Preface

This study of "The Marvellous in Malory" is an attempt, first, to classify and to analyse those beliefs and customs concerning the supernatural which are reflected in Le Morte D'Arthur; and secondly, to relate such beliefs and customs to certain survivals in modern life. It makes no effort to treat Malory's sources or to deal with origins.

The text used for this study was the Everyman's Library edition of Le Morte D'Arthur for which I make no apology, having compared this edition line by line with Dr. Sommer's edition, which it follows with comparatively few exceptions, the chief of which--its employment of modernized punctuation and spelling--have recommended, rather than condemned, its use in a study for which no investigation of Malory's language has been necessary.

It gives me great pleasure to express my appreciation to the attendants at the Radcliffe Camera of the Bodleian Library for their courteous service; to Professor A. C. L. Brown of Northwestern University for his suggestion of a subject; to Professor Marvin F. Beeson of the College of William and Mary for many helpful suggestions; and to Dean Grace Warren Landrum, also of the College of William and Mary, for advice and guidance which have made this undertaking possible. I am doubly grateful because I had not the slightest claim upon their time and interest.

July 23, 1930

Ellen L. Lash

SUMMARY

My thesis is that the marvellous in Malory appears for the most part in one of the following forms, magical aspects of the kingship, therapeutic magic, enchantment, divination, oneiromancy, or supernaturalism connected with the Holy Grail; that these forms, with the exception of supernaturalism connected with the Holy Grail, existed in primitive society, flourished in the Middle Ages, and survive in modern life; and that religious supernaturalism, similar to that connected with the Holy Grail, appeared in primitive society, flourished in the Middle Ages, and survives in modern life.

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

To those who believe that a study of "The Marvellous in Malory", involving as it does a consideration of magic and allied crafts of almost as black a hue, needs justification, this introduction is directed.

Frazer,¹ whose contributions to social anthropology are perhaps without parallel, describes the "belief in the efficacy of magic" as a "universal faith", a "truly Catholic creed".² He even goes so far as to conjecture that there has been an Age of Magic on the intellectual side of human culture just as there has been an Age of Stone on the material side.³ He is also responsible for this statement: "Among the ignorant and superstitious classes of modern Europe it [the system of sympathetic magic] is very much what it was thousands of years ago in Egypt and India, and what it now is among the lowest savages surviving in the remotest corners of the world".⁴

1. J. G. Frazer, Fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge, and Professor of Social Anthropology in the University of Liverpool.

2. Frazer, The Golden Bough, Part 1, The Magic Art, Vol. 1, pp. 235-236.

3. Ibid., p. 235.

4. Ibid., p. 236.

First among the conclusions reached by Kittredge in his study, Witchcraft in Old and New England, are:

- "1. The belief in witchcraft is the common heritage of humanity. It is not chargeable to any particular time, or race, or form of religion.
2. Witchcraft in some shape or other is still credited by a majority of the human race."⁵

Magic is as infectious as it is deep-rooted, according to Singer, who has expressed the following view: "Of all forms of cultural influence magic passes most easily and most rapidly from people to people".⁶

Prevalence and infectiousness, however, do not necessarily add respectability to a study of magic; perhaps its influence upon social relationships will. Westermarck says that "the social importance of magic has never been fully realised".⁷ He is of the opinion that the "belief in magic has greatly increased parents' power over their children",⁸ that the religious significance of charity is partially dependent upon the fusion of magic with religion,⁹ and also that the tradition of hospitality and the right of sanctuary both have their roots in magic.¹⁰

5. Kittredge, Witchcraft in Old and New England, p. 372.
6. Singer, Early English Magic and Medicine, p. 3.
7. Westermarck, The Influence of Magic on Social Relationships, p. 143.
8. Ibid., p. 145.
9. Ibid., p. 150.
10. Ibid., pp. 152-167.

Although he does not in the least minimize the harm done by superstition, Frazer, in presenting what he terms "a plausible plea for a very dubious client",¹¹ proves that among "certain races and at certain times superstition has strengthened the respect" for government, for private property, for marriage, and for human life.¹²

In support of his theory that superstition has strengthened respect for government, Frazer offers this evidence: "Among many peoples the task of government has been greatly facilitated by a superstition that the governors belong to a superior order of beings and possess certain supernatural or magical powers to which the governed can make no claim and can offer no resistance".¹³

That superstition has strengthened the respect for private property is evident in Polynesia. Here, according to Frazer,

"the system of taboo reached its highest development; for the effect of taboos was, in the opinion of the natives, to endow it with a supernatural or magical energy which rendered it practically unapproachable by any but the owner. Thus taboo became a powerful instrument for strengthening the ties.. of private property".¹⁴

11. Frazer, Psyche's Task, p. 3.

12. Ibid., p. 4.

13. Ibid., p. 6.

14. Ibid., p. 20.

The fact that among certain peoples and at certain times superstition has increased the respect for marriage and the respect for human life has also been established with sound proof.

If the reader is not yet convinced that a study involving a consideration of magic is justified in this scientific age because magic is no longer prevalent, infectious, or socially influential, let him open his eyes. The child still retraces her¹⁵ steps or repeats the mystical formula, "Bread and butter, cake and cheese", to ward off the spell which she invites when she goes to the left of a tree, pole, or other obstacle, while her companion goes to the right, or vice versa. Perhaps she will also kiss the book which she drops to keep from missing her lesson. When she says a word at the same time that another says it, the two lock little fingers, press thumbs together, and say "Thumbs", one naming one author, the other another. There are yet those who believe that it is bad luck to stand under an open umbrella inside the house, to break a mirror, or to start on a journey on the thirteenth day of the month. Horseshoes are occasionally seen over doorways. Who fails to take notice, at least, of the black cat which crosses his path? Ghosts walk even yet!

15. These customs are, I believe, more prevalent among girls than among boys.

Chapter 11

TYPES OF PRIMITIVE MAGIC REFLECTED IN LE MORTE D'ARTHUR

Although magic is one of the most outstanding characteristics of Le Morte D'Arthur, the task of analysing and classifying it into type forms is simple; the marvellous appears often, but in few distinctive types. It manifests itself, almost without exception, in the following forms: as a magical aspect of the kingship, as therapeutic magic, as enchantment, as divination, as oneiromancy, or as supernaturalism connected with the Holy Grail--all five of which forms are vestiges of certain types of primitive magic which will be considered in the following pages.

In primitive society the road to royalty was frequently paved with magic.¹ The king often attained his position "by virtue of his supposed proficiency in the black or white art".²

Strange traditions have likewise been associated with the removal of savage kings from office. Frazer cites the following:

"The people of Congo believed....that if their pontiff the Chitome were to die a natural death, the world would perish, and the earth, which he alone sustained by his power and merit,

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1. Frazer, The Golden Bough, Part 1, The Magic Art, Vol. 1, p. 332.
 2. Ibid., p. 51.

would immediately be annihilated. Accordingly when he fell ill and seemed likely to die, the man who was destined to be his successor entered the pontiff's house with a rope or a club and strangled or clubbed him to death...

"Some peoples...appear to have thought it unsafe to wait for even the slightest symptom of decay and have preferred to kill the king while he was still in the full vigour of life. Accordingly, they have fixed a term beyond which he might not reign, and at the close of which he must die, the term fixed upon being short enough to exclude the probability of his degenerating physically in the interval. In some parts of southern India the period fixed was twelve years".³

Perhaps even closer than the relationship between the kingship and magic was that which existed during primitive times between therapeutics and magic.

According to Frazer, "magicians or medicine-men appear to constitute the oldest artificial or professional class in the evolution of society".⁴ The following practice, suggestive of the close connection between therapeutics and magic, is cited by Skeat and Blagden:

"To avert death recourse is had in sickness to a magician (Foyang), no other person being supposed to have the right of imploring mercy from Pirman. These magicians are an order of men combining the functions of priest, physician, and sorcerer".⁵

Hartland thinks it probable "that all medicine has arisen out of witchcraft, in the same way as chemistry, the true science,

3. Frazer, The Golden Bough, Part 3, The Dying God, pp. 14, 46.
4. Frazer, The Golden Bough, Part 1, The Magic Art, Vol. 1, p.420.
5. Skeat and Blagden, Pagan Races of the Malay Peninsula, Vol. 2, pp. 350-351.

has emerged from alchemy, the false, and astronomy from astrology".⁶ Kellett is more dogmatic in his statement that "all healing of course was magic".⁷

Conspicuous among curatives used both by primitive peoples and by the medieval knights in Le Morte D'Arthur is human blood. Regarding its use by the former, Frazer writes as follows:

"...it is a common practice with the Central Australians to give human blood to the sick and aged for the purpose of strengthening them; and in order that the blood may have this effect it need not always be drunk by the infirm person, it is enough to sprinkle it on his body. For example, a young man will often open a vein in his arm and let the blood trickle over the body of an older man in order to strengthen his aged friend; and sometimes the old man will drink a little of the blood...The blood is drawn from a man or woman who is related to the sufferer either by blood or marriage, and the notion always is to convey to the sick person some of the strength of the blood-giver".⁸

A connection between royalty and magic may have existed; therapeutics and magic may have been even more closely related, but the spell was of the very essence of magic. Nor were the services of a professional magician,⁹

6. E. S. Hartland, The Legend of Perseus, Vol. 2, p. 117.

7. E. E. Kellett, The Story of Myths, p. 157.

8. J. G. Frazer, The Golden Bough, Part 1, The Magic Art, Vol. 1, p. 91.

9. Frazer, The Golden Bough, Part 1, The Magic Art, Vol. 1, p. 420. "Now magicians or medicine-men appear to constitute the oldest artificial or professional class in the evolution of society. For sorcerers are found in every savage tribe known to us; and among the lowest savages, such as the Australian aborigines, they are the only professional class that exists."

prevalent as magicians were in primitive tribes, essential to the spell's effectiveness. Frazer, citing the experience of Aymonier, writes: "In Laos when an elephant hunter is starting for the chase, he warns his wife not to cut her hair or oil her body in his absence; for if she cut her hair the elephant would burst the coils, if she oiled herself it would slip through them".¹⁰ In this simple illustration of imitative magic an elephant hunter's wife could cast a spell without her victim's even being present.

In a consideration of the spell the instrument, as well as the agent, is of interest. Human hair plays a conspicuous part in primitive magic. Spencer and Gillen have described the making of a hair girdle by natives of Central Australia:

"When a man dies his hair is cut off by his sons, if he has no sons then by his younger brothers or by their sons, or, failing them, by the sons of his elder brothers.... Some time after the burial of the man the hair is taken to a secluded spot safe from the intrusion of women, and here the sons and younger brothers of the deceased make it up into a hair-girdle which is given to a son of the dead man, the eldest son having the first right to it, or, failing him, to a younger brother.... This girdle is a valued possession, and is only worn on such occasions as a tribal fight, or when a man is going out as a Kurdaitcha. It is supposed to be endowed with magic power and to add to its possessor all the war-like attributes of the dead man from whose hair it was made. It

10. Ibid., p. 120.

ensures accuracy of aim and at the same time destroys that of an adversary. In the same way a small piece of a dead man's hair--cut from the body after death--is sometimes placed in the inside of one of the ordinary hair necklets, and worn as a charm by men. To even place by the side of a woman or child one of these magic girdles or necklets would be productive of serious evil to her".¹¹

The chief medicine man of the Nandi of British East Africa is credited with another accomplishment. According to Frazer,

"He is a diviner, and foretells the future by casting stones, inspecting entrails, interpreting dreams, and prophesying when he is drunk. The Nandi believe implicitly in his powers".¹²

People more civilized than the Nandi, however, have acknowledged the power of the oneirocritic. Joseph's ability to interpret Pharaoh's dream in which appeared first the seven fat kine that were devoured by the seven lean kine and then the seven full ears that were devoured by the seven poor ears, after all the magicians and wise men of Egypt had failed to interpret it, caused him to be elevated to the post of food administrator, whom none but Pharaoh himself surpassed in authority.¹³ Similarly, Daniel's ability to tell Nebuchadnezzar the dream which he had forgotten, as well as his ability to interpret it, secured him royal preferment in Babylon.¹⁴

Supernaturalism, as well as magic, is occasionally involved in a consideration of dreams. Joseph refused to

11. Spencer and Gillen, The Native Tribes of Central Australia, pp. 538-539.

12. Frazer, The Magic Art and The Evolution of Kings, Vol.1, p. 344.

13. Genesis 41:1-44.

14. Daniel 2: 1-48.

accept the credit for explaining Pharaoh's dream, saying, "It is not in me: God shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace".¹⁵

Likewise Daniel, in response to Nebuchadnezzar's question "Art thou able to make known unto me the dream which I have seen, and the interpretation thereof?" replied:

"The secret which the king hath demanded cannot the wise men, the astrologers, the magicians, the soothsayers, shew unto the king; "But there is a God in heaven that revealeth secrets, and maketh known to the king Nebuchadnezzar what shall be in the latter days".¹⁶

The conflict between magic and religion has not always existed, according to Frazer, who writes as follows:

"Yet this antagonism, familiar as it is to us, seems to have made its appearance comparatively late in the history of religion. At an earlier stage the functions of priest and sorcerer were often combined or, to speak perhaps more correctly, were not yet differentiated from each other".¹⁷

Reference has already been made to the Poyangs of the Malays, who combine "the functions of priest, physician, and sorcerer". Regarding them, Skeat and Blagden make the following comments:

"The Malays (who appear to be more superstitious than the Benua) have a greater faith in the efficacy of the supplications of these Poyangs, and a greater dread of their supernatural power. They are believed not only to be able to cure the most virulent maladies, but to inflict disease

15. Genesis 41: 16.

16. Daniel 2: 26-28.

17. Frazer, The Magic Art and The Evolution of Kings, Vol. 1, p. 226.

and death upon an adversary, and the Malays have recourse to them for both purposes. Even the tigers are believed to be subject to them, and every magician has one in constant attendance upon him. When a man falls a victim to a tiger he is supposed to have been sacrificed to the malevolence of some magician whom he has offended".¹⁸

After this very brief consideration of manifestations of the magical aspects of the kingship, of therapeutic magic, of enchantment, of divination, of oneiromancy, and of a rudimentary religious supernaturalism among primitive peoples, attention will now be given the appearance of these same types of magic in Malory's Le Morte D'Arthur.

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18. Skeat and Blagden, Pagan Races of the Malay Peninsula, Vol. 2, p. 351.

Chapter III

THE MARVELLOUS IN LE MORTE D'ARTHUR

A. Magical Aspects of the Kingship

A reflection of the association of magic with royalty is seen in the glamorous aura enveloping the person of Arthur; the king-maker, Merlin, possessed in an even greater degree the occult power.

Just before he died, Uther Pendragon, "king of all England",¹ had expressed the wish that his son Arthur, then two years old, should rule after him. Arthur, however, was reared in comparative obscurity as Sir Ector's son, the condition upon which Merlin had promised to bring about the liaison between Uther and Igraine which had resulted in Arthur's birth having been that he be given charge of the infant's rearing. Dissension among the nobles was almost inevitable; it is not surprising to find that "every lord that was mighty of men made him strong, and many weened to have been king".²

At this time Merlin went to the Archbishop of Canterbury and advised him to call a meeting of all lords and gentlemen of arms for Christmas Day, at which time Jesus would show, by means of a miracle, "who should be

1. Malory, Le Morte D'Arthur, Everyman's Library edition, Vol. 1, p. 5. Hereafter, all references will be made to this edition.

2. Ibid., p. 10.

rightways king of this realm". Merlin's advice was followed, and at the appointed time the lords and gentlemen gathered

"In the greatest church of London, whether it were Paul's or not the French book maketh no mention... And when matins and the first mass was done, there was seen in the churchyard, against the high altar, a great stone four square, like unto a marble stone, and in midst thereof was like an anvil of steel a foot on high, and therein stuck a fair sword naked by the point, and letters there were written in gold about the sword that said thus: Whoso pulleth out this sword of this stone and anvil, is rightwise king born of all England".³

Although not one of the knights present was successful in withdrawing the sword, the Archbishop's confidence that God would reveal the successor to the throne was unshaken. Word went forth that all comers might try their skill. To keep the lords and commons together, a joust was arranged for New Year's Day. Sir Ector rode to this joust with his son, Sir Kay, and his foster-son, the young Arthur. En route Sir Kay discovered that he had left his sword at home and besought Arthur to return and get it. Arthur assented willingly, but found no one at home. Determined that his foster-brother should not go to the jousts swordless, Arthur decided to stop in the churchyard and to extract the sword from the stone. We are told that he

3. Ibid.

"lightly and fiercely pulled it out of the stone"⁴ and carried it to Kay, who recognized it and showed it to his father; whereupon all three rode back to the churchyard. Perhaps because the knights appointed to guard the sword had been absent when Arthur withdrew it, Sir Ector had him replace it and then tried to withdraw it, but without success. Arthur again succeeded with ease. Sir Ector and Sir Kay then knelt before him. When Arthur objected to such veneration from his father and brother, Sir Ector revealed the fact that he was only his foster-father, and Kay his foster-brother, but confessed that Arthur was of nobler birth than he had realized and requested him to make Sir Kay seneschal of all his lands when he became king. Arthur promised.

In spite of the fact that Arthur had succeeded in removing the sword, the barons tried their skill on Twelfth-day, though not one was successful. Jealous of Arthur's prowess, they tried again at Candlemas; but Arthur, only, was able to remove it. The result was the same at Easter and again at Pentecost when the commons cried: "We will have Arthur unto our king, we will put him no more in delay, for we all see that it is God's will that he shall be our king, and who that holdeth against it, we will slay him".⁵ At this point rich and poor alike knelt

4. Ibid., p. 11.

5. Ibid., pp. 13-14.

and asked mercy, which they obtained. Arthur was then knighted and crowned, swearing "unto his lords and the commons for to be a true king, to stand with true justice from thenceforth the days of this life".⁶

Since Arthur was spoken of as "young Arthur", since no mention had previously been made of his strength, and since older and more experienced nobles had failed to withdraw the sword, Arthur's achievement, which obtained for him the kingship, suggests his supernatural origin.

Mystery also surrounded Excalibur,⁷ the sword

6. Ibid., p. 14.

7. Mythical heroes quite commonly possess remarkable swords. In the Volunga Saga, the magic sword Gram became the property of Sigmund because he alone was able to draw it from Branstock, the oak into which Odin had thrust it. (Cf. A. S. Murray, Manual of Mythology, p. 322; C. M. Gayley, The Classic Myths in English Literature, pp. 392-393.) In its German analogue, the Nibelungenlied, Siegfried is the possessor of the marvellous sword Balmung, made by dwarfs. (Cf. C. M. Gayley, The Classic Myths in English Literature, p. 400; Horroena, Anglo-Saxon Classics, Vol. XII, p. 155.) Beowulf owned two magic swords: "Wæ gling with the golden hilt, and the Runic letters engraved in gold, that are sure to bring good fortune to the possessor"; and Hrunting, whose "blade was hardened in dragon's blood". This is a counterpart of Siegfried's Balmung (ibid., pp. 270-273). In Lombardian legend Emperor Ortnit's sword Rosen "could cut through steel and iron, and even dragon's scales". (Cf. Epics and Romances of the Middle Ages, p. 74.) A Carolingian legend describes a sword which could split a marble rock--Roland's Durindart, given him by an angel (ibid., pp. 404-406).

given Arthur by the Lady of the Lake. He first saw it in the middle of the lake, held by an arm clothed in white samite, and went out in a boat for it, as the Lady of the Lake directed. After Arthur grasped the sword, the arm disappeared beneath the surface of the water. Merlin asked Arthur which he liked better, the sword or the scabbard. When Arthur replied that he preferred the sword, Merlin's answer was that the scabbard was "worth ten of the swords, for whiles ye have the scabbard upon you, ye shall never lose no blood be ye never so sore wounded, therefore keep well the scabbard always with you".⁸ Just before Arthur's passing, he directed Bedivere to throw the sword into the water. As he obeyed, "there came an arm and an hand above the water and met it, and caught it, and so shook it thrice and brandished, and then vanished away the hand with the sword in the water".⁹

Bedivere remained with Arthur until the barge bearing the weeping ladies took him away. Arthur told Bedivere that he was going to Avalon, there to be healed of his wound. The next morning Bedivere came upon a chapel where there was a new tomb. He asked who was buried there. Upon being told that the body was brought at midnight by a number of ladies, Bedivere naturally concluded that it was Arthur's corpse. Malory writes:

'More of the death of King Arthur could

8. Le Morte D'Arthur, Vol. 1, p. 44.

9. Le Morte D'Arthur, Vol. 2, p. 389.

I never find, but that ladies brought him to his burials; and such one was buried there.... but yet the hermit knew not in certain that he was verily the body of King Arthur....

"Yet some men say in many parts of England that King Arthur is not dead, but had by the will of our Lord Jesu into another place; and men say that he shall come again, and he shall win the holy cross. I will not say it shall be so, but rather I will say, here in this world he changed his life. But many men say that there is written upon his tomb this verse: HIC JACET ARTHURUS REX, QUONDAM REX QUE FUTURUS".¹⁰

The mystery which surrounded Arthur's birth, his accession to the throne, and his sword Excalibur was not solved at his passing. The part played by the weeping ladies who bore Arthur away to Avalon brings to mind the efforts put forth by primitive people to prevent their ruler from dying a natural death, thus warding off the dire calamities which they thought would befall them if he died from natural causes.

10. Ibid., p. 391.

This belief has analogues in other legends. According to one version of a Bavarian tradition, Charlemagne was to arise and fight a battle, after which he would rule over a new Germany (cf. Encyclopaedia Britannica, Vol. V, p. 896). Charlemagne is said to have been a model for Frederick I, surnamed "Barbarossa", about whom an interesting myth also developed: "The place of his burial is unknown, and the legend which says he still sits in a cavern in the Kyffhäuser mountain in Thuringia waiting until the need of his country shall call him, is now thought to refer, at least in its earlier form, to his grandson, the emperor Frederick II" (cf. Encyclopaedia Britannica, Vol. XI, p. 46).

Millenarians today believe that Christ will return to earth before the end of the world to reign (cf. The Americana, Vol. XIX, p. 116).

Chapter 111

B. Therapeutic Magic

The cures effected in Le Morte D'Arthur represent an interesting stage in the evolution of medicine. The practitioner was no longer the primitive magician; yet the manner in which the cures were effected continued to smack of thaumaturgy.

Blood continued to seem highly regarded as a curative. The manner in which it was obtained was most unprofessional.

Balin, who struck King Pellam the dolorous stroke, was forgivably angry when his companion was seized as they entered a castle. He would have fought with her captors; but "they all said nay, they would not fight with him, for they did nothing but the old custom of the castle, and told him how their lady was sick, and had lain many years, and she might not be whole but if she had a dish of silver full of blood of a clean maid and a king's daughter; and therefore the custom of this castle is, there shall no damosel pass this way but she shall bleed of her blood in a silver dish full".¹¹ Balin then gave his consent for the maiden to be bled, but her sacrifice was of no avail. The lady of the castle was not cured until she was anointed with the blood of

11. Le Morte D'Arthur, Vol. 1, p. 62.

Sir Perceval's sister, the giving of which cost the donor's life.¹²

Balin's host's son, who had been wounded by the knight Garlon that always rode unseen, could be healed only by that knight's blood. Garlon was already the object of Balin's wrath since he had killed two knights, Herlews le Berbeus and Perin de Mountbeliard; so, when the opportunity presented itself at a feast in King Pellam's castle, Balin clove Garlon's head and smote his body with the same cleaver used by Garlon in slaying Herlews le Berbeus, and called his companion, saying, "Now may ye fetch blood enough to heal your son withal".¹³ No further mention is made of the wounded boy.

King Pellam sought to revenge his brother's death, but was himself struck by Balin with a marvellous spear and dropped in a swoon; then the roof and walls of the castle fell, as did Balin, his hands and feet paralysed. Both were pinned under the debris. Balin was rescued three days later by Merlin; but "King Pellam lay so, many years sore wounded, and might never be whole till Galahad the haughty prince healed him in the quest of the Sangreal, for in that place was part of the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, that Joseph of Arimathea brought into this land".¹⁴

12. Le Morte D'Arthur, Vol. 2, p. 252.

13. Le Morte D'Arthur, Vol. 1, p. 63.

14. Ibid., pp. 64-65.

A remedy containing waters of paradise possessed remarkable power. Sir Gawaine sustained a severed vein and was told by his adversary, Priamus, that no barber in Brittany could staunch its bleeding. Priamus, however, agreed to do it if Sir Gawaine would help him to be christened and to believe in God. Gawaine promised his aid. After reaching a meadow in which they let their horses graze, they unarmed themselves. Their wounds bled; then "Priamus took from his page a phial full of the four waters that came out of paradise, and with certain balm anointed their wounds, and washed them with that water, and within an hour after they were both as whole as ever they were".¹⁵

Among other cures which attract attention are two effected by Launcelot. Sir Meliot de Logres had been wounded by Sir Gilbert the Bastard, whom he slew. Sir Meliot's sister had been told by a sorceress that her brother's wounds could be healed only if she got a knight to go into the Chapel Perilous for Sir Gilbert's sword and a piece of the bloody cloth with which he was swathed; the wounds were then to be searched with the sword and the cloth. Launcelot agreed to assist. Undeterred by the thirty giant knights in the churchyard, the quaking of the earth as he cut the cloth, and the craft of another sorceress whom he

15. Idid., p. 147.

met as he left the churchyard, Launcelot returned to the castle in which Sir Meliot lay. He then touched the sword to the wounds, which he wiped with the cloth, and presto! Sir Meliot was whole.¹⁶

Later Launcelot healed Sir Urre's wounds that had been made to fester and bleed by a sorceress, the mother of a knight whom Sir Urre had slain. They could be healed only when probed by "the best knight of the world". After a seven-year search for this knight, Sir Urre's mother and sister brought him to Arthur's court. Arthur and a hundred and ten of his knights searched Sir Urre's wounds in vain. At Arthur's command and the entreaties of many kings and knights and of Sir Urre, Launcelot searched the wounds, first praying secretly:

"Thou blessed Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,
I beseech thee of thy mercy, that my simple
worship and honesty be saved, and thou
blessed Trinity, thou mayst give power to
heal this sick knight by thy great virtue
and grace of thee, but, good lord, never
of myself",¹⁷

Immediately the seven wounds healed. The narrative continues:

"Then King Arthur and all the kings and
knights kneeled down and gave thankings
and lovings unto God and to his blessed
mother. And ever Sir Launcelot wept as
he had been a child that had been beaten",¹⁸

16. Ibid., pp. 173-175.

17. Le Morte D'Arthur, Vol. 2, p. 337.

18. Ibid.

Galahad, the most successful knight in the quest of the Holy Grail, also effected wonderful cures. The maimed king became whole after this knight anointed him with blood from the bleeding spear.¹⁹ As Galahad, Perceval, and Bors entered the city of Sarras, Galahad asked an old "crooked" man to help them move a silver table. The old man explained that he had had to use crutches for ten years; but when Galahad asked him to rise and show his good will, he tried, and found himself "whole as ever he was".²⁰

In addition to those effected by blood and by the ministrations of revered knights, three Holy Grail cures are worthy of notice. Launcelot's sanity was restored when he was brought before it.²¹ Sir Ector and Sir Perceval had been mortally wounded, as they thought. When Sir Perceval prayed, however, the Holy Grail appeared and "both were as whole of hide and limb as ever they were in their life days".²²

A marvellous story was told of a shield which came into Sir Galahad's possession. At one time it had belonged to King Evelake, and had been given him when the son of Joseph of Arimathaea converted him to Christianity. When one of King Evelake's men lost a hand, Joseph directed him "go with good devotion touch the Cross" on the shield. Immediately his hand was restored.²³

- 19. Ibid., p. 266.
- 20. Ibid., p. 267.
- 21. Ibid., p. 150.
- 22. Ibid., p. 144.
- 23. Ibid., pp. 176-177.

The most impossible of all cures was one effected by Dame Linet. Sir Gareth cut off a knight's head, which Dame Linet anointed. She then applied ointment to the neck and put the head back in place. The knight arose, whole.²⁴

We find a forerunner of modern anaesthetics in the drink given by the sorceress Queen Morgan le Fay to Alisander, who was convalescent after having been sorely wounded. The drink made him sleep for three days and nights while he was being transported to Morgan le Fay's castle.²⁵

Reluctant as the reader may be to acknowledge that Launcelot and Galahad were successors of the primitive medicine man, he cannot fail to see how closely Queen Morgan le Fay and Dame Linet resembled their savage predecessors.

24. Le Morte D'Arthur, Vol. 1, p. 215.

25. Le Morte D'Arthur, Vol. 2, p. 33.

Chapter 111

C. Enchantment

It is fitting that enchantment, which is of the very essence of magic, should be practised by Merlin, the prince of magicians. He once made use of it to disguise his identity from Arthur who sat brooding over the loss of his horse, which had been taken by Sir Pellinore.

"Right so came by him Merlin like a child of fourteen year of age, and saluted the king, and asked him why he was so pensive. I may well be pensive said the king, for I have seen the marvelliest sight that ever I saw. That know I well, said Merlin, as well as thyself, and of all thy thoughts, but thou art but a fool to take thought, for it will not amend thee. Also I know what thou art, and who was thy father, and of whom thou wert begotten; King Uther Pendragon was thy father, and begat thee on Igraine. That is false, said King Arthur, how shouldst thou know it, for thou are not so old of years to know my father? Yes, said Merlin, I know it better than ye or any man living. I will not believe thee, said Arthur, and was wroth with the child. So departed Merlin, and came again in the likeness of an old man of fourscore year of age, whereof the king was right glad, for he seemed to be right wise."²⁶

Merlin again made use of enchantment to save the life of King Arthur, whom Pellinore was about to slay. Seeing Arthur's predicament, "Merlin cast an enchantment to the

26. Le Morte D'Arthur, Vol. 1, p. 36.

knight, that he fell to the earth in a great sleep".²⁷ Arthur regretted that such a noble knight had been killed, but was assured by Merlin that he was only sleeping and would awake within three hours. A few days later they met Sir Pellinore; but Merlin, by the use of his subtle craft, prevented him from seeing Arthur in order to forestall an encounter.²⁸

Nimue, "the damosel of the lake", also used her craft for Arthur's protection. Arthur's sister, Morgan le Fay, betrayed the king's trust by giving Excalibur with its scabbard, which would prevent the wearer from loss of blood, to her paramour, Sir Accolon, whom she planned to elevate to the kingship. Later when Arthur and Accolon met in battle, Arthur was sorely wounded and lost much blood, while his adversary lost none. Nimue took pity on Arthur when she saw him in such straits; "at the next stroke Sir Accolon struck him such a stroke that by the damosel's enchantment the sword Excalibur fell out of Accolon's hand to the earth",²⁹ and Arthur recovered both sword and scabbard.

Later the scabbard was stolen by Queen Morgan le Fay. When Arthur discovered his loss, he gave chase. Realizing that she was in danger of being overtaken, the

27. Ibid., p. 42.

28. Ibid., p. 44.

29. Ibid., p. 103.

³⁰
sorceress rode into a lake and threw the scabbard into
the deepest part.

"Then she rode into a valley where many great stones were, and when she saw she must be overtaken, she shaped herself, horse and man, by enchantment unto a great marble stone. Anon withal came Sir Arthur and Sir Gwylake whereas the king might know his sister and her men, and one knight from another. Ah, said the king, here may ye see the vengeance of God, and now am I sorry that this misadventure is befallen. And then he looked for the scabbard, but it would not be found, so he returned to the abbey where he came from. So when Arthur was gone she turned all into the likeliness as she and they were before, and said, Sirs, now may we go where we will."³¹

Morgan le Fay was more successful in eluding Arthur than she was in a subsequent attempt to kill him. After Arthur had returned to court, she sent him a mantle, "the richest mantle that ever was seen in that court, for it was set as full of precious stones as one might stand by another, and there were the richest stones that ever the king saw". The messenger who brought the mantle said to Arthur: "Your sister sendeth you this mantle, and desireth that ye should take this gift of her; and in what thing she hath offended you, she will amend it at your own pleasure".³² The "damosel of the lake" arrived just in time to save King Arthur from the fate which Morgan le Fay had

of necromancy". *Ibid.*, p. 8.
^{30,31.} *Ibid.*, p. 109. school in a nunnery, and
^{32.} *Ibid.*, p. 110. she was a great clerk
^{31.} *Ibid.*, p. 109.
^{32.} *Ibid.*, p. 110.

planned for him.

"Sir, said the damosel, put not on you this mantle till ye have seen more, and in no wise let it not come on you nor on no knight of yours till ye command the bringer thereof to put it upon her. Well, said King Arthur, it shall be done as ye counsel me. And then he said unto the damosel that came from his sister, Damosel, this mantle that ye have brought me, I will see it upon you. Sir, she said, It will not beseem me to wear a king's garment. By my head, said Arthur, ye shall wear it or it come on my back, or any man's that here is. And so the king made it to be put upon her, and forthwithal she fell down dead, and never more spake word after and burnt to coals."³³

Use was again made of enchantment to settle a quarrel among four sorceresses, Morgan le Fay among them, over Sir Launcelot, whom they saw sleeping under an apple tree; each "would have him to her love".³⁴ Morgan le Fay

33. Ibid., p. 111.

Two other instruments of enchantment are worth noting here. A ring lent Gareth by Lady Liones possessed remarkable properties, described as follows by the owner: "And the virtue of my ring is that, that is green it will turn to red, and that is red it will turn in likeness to green, and that is blue it will turn in likeness of white, and that is white it will turn in likeness to blue, and so it will do of all manner of colours. Also who that beareth my ring shall lose no blood, and for great love I will give you this ring".

Ibid., p. 224. The other was the philtre which Isoud's mother directed Dame Bragwaine and Gouvernail to give King Mark on the day that he should wed Isoud. The philtre was to be drunk to Isoud and would cause them to "love other the days of their life". Ibid., p. 272.

34. Ibid., p. 155.

promised to cast an enchantment upon him, which would cause him to sleep six hours, and to take him to her castle, where he would awake in her power; then she would let him choose one of them as paramour. Launcelot preferred death in prison to such an arrangement, but was saved from either fate by a damosel of the castle.

Later when Launcelot was mentally deranged, he was found sleeping near a well. To prevent the possibility of his becoming violent on being awakened, Dame Brisen cast a spell upon him to make him sleep an hour.³⁵

A sleeping state was also a feature of the spell cast by Nimue upon Sir Pelleas. When she heard that the knight had been deceived by Lady Ettard, Nimue "threw an enchantment upon him, and he fell on sleep". Then she brought Lady Ettard into his presence and "threw such an enchantment upon her that she loved him sore, that well nigh she was out of her mind".³⁶ The spell had just the contrary effect upon Sir Pelleas, for when he awaked, "he hated her more than any woman alive"³⁷ and went off with Nimue, leaving Lady Ettard to die of a broken heart.

The spell cast by a nameless lady involved more action than Nimue's spell. This lady had long loved King Meliodas in vain. At length "by an enchantment she made

35. Le Morte D'Arthur, Vol. 2, p. 150.

36. Le Morte D'Arthur, Vol. 1, p. 122.

37. Ibid., p. 123.

him chase an hart by himself alone till that he came to an old castle, and there anon he was taken prisoner by the lady that him loved".³⁸ He was soon afterwards freed by Merlin.

It seems strange that Merlin should himself be the victim of another's spell, but such was the case. Fearing Merlin, who was enamored of her, Nimue told him to go under a magic stone and to tell her of its marvels. There he was entombed by her craft.³⁹ Sir Bagdemagus tried to rescue him, but found the stone too heavy for a hundred men to lift. Hearing him outside, Merlin bade him "leave his labour, for all was in vain, for he might never be holpen but by her that put him there".⁴⁰ It is interesting to note that Merlin had previously expressed the belief that he would "be put in the earth quick"⁴¹ to Arthur.

The conviction of the damosel who came to Arthur's court, girt with a sword from which she could not be released except by a knight who was "a passing good man of his hands and of his deeds, and without villainy or treachery, and without treason",⁴² was the result of Lady Lile of Avelion's spell. She was subsequently released by Balin, a poorly arrayed ex-prisoner, after

38. Ibid., p. 239.

39. Ibid., p. 91.

40. Ibid., p. 96.

41. Ibid., p. 37.

42. Ibid., p. 46.

Arthur and a number of his barons had failed to withdraw the sword from its sheath.

After Balin's death, "Merlin let make by his subtilty that Balin's sword was put in a marble stone standing upright as great as a mill stone, and the stone hoveled always above the water and did many years, and so by adventure it swam down the stream to the City of Camelot, that is in English Winchester".⁴³

Perhaps it is wise to include also in this study of enchantment the remarkable feature of Gawaine's strength. "Then had Sir Gawaine such a grace and gift that an holy man had given to him, that every day in the year, from underne till high noon, his might increased those three hours as much as thrice his strength."⁴⁴

The various skills exhibited by Merlin, Nimue, and Queen Morgan le Fay--not to mention those of Dame Brisen, the nameless lady, and the holy man--seem to indicate that the sorcerers in Le Morte D'Arthur are as versatile as the Malayan Poyang.⁴⁵

43. Ibid., p. 70.

44. Le Morte D'Arthur, Vol. 2, p. 375.

45. See pp. 10-11.

Chapter 111

D. Divination

Enchantment and other occult arts were within Merlin's range; divination,⁴⁶ however, was his peculiar province.

Among the most noteworthy of his prophecies were those concerning Arthur. Soon after Arthur's coronation, Merlin made this prediction concerning him to those kings who, angry because one so young and so obscure had become king of such a realm, were besieging the tower in which he had taken refuge: "or he die, he shall be long king of all England, and have under his obeissance Wales, Ireland, and Scotland, and more realms than I will now rehearse". All of those who heard Merlin's words were not equally credulous. "Some of the kings had marvel of Merlin's words, and deemed well that it should be as he said; and some of them laughed him to scorn, as King Lot; and more other called him a witch."⁴⁷ They agreed, nevertheless, to let Arthur come out and talk to them. "So Merlin went unto King Arthur, and told him how he had done, and bade him fear not, but come out boldly and speak

46. The unknown is also revealed through dreams and visions, but consideration will be given them in the succeeding sections.

47. Le Morte D'Arthur, Vol. 1, p. 15.

with them, and spare them not, but answer them as their king and chieftain, for ye shall overcome them all, whether they will or nill."⁴⁸

The prediction given below was made after Arthur, with the help of King Ban and King Bors, had rescued King Leodegrance of Cameliant from King Rience. Arthur offered to return with the two kings who had aided him, since their land was beset by King Claudas; but they declined his proffer, saying that they would send for him if they needed him, and asked Arthur to let them know if he needed their help. Merlin, however, prophesied as follows:

"It shall not, said Merlin, need that these two kings come again in the way of war, but I know well King Arthur may not be long from you, for within a year or two ye shall have great need, and then shall he revenge you on your enemies, as ye have done on his. For these eleven kings shall die all in a day, by the great might and prowess of arms of two valiant knights (as it telleth after), their names be Balin le Savage, and Balan, his brother, that be marvellous good knights as be any living".⁴⁹

Merlin foretold both the agent of Arthur's destruction and the kind of death he would die:

"..ye have done a thing late that God is displeased with you, for ye have lain by your sister, and on her ye have gotten

48. Ibid., p. 16.

49. Ibid., p. 33.

a child that shall destroy you and all the knights of your realm.... I may well be sorry, said Merlin, for I shall die a shameful death to be put in the earth quick, and ye shall die a worshipful death".⁵⁰

Because Merlin had told Arthur that he would be killed by one born on May Day, Arthur summoned all the children of noble parentage, born on that day, and sent them to sea. The ship with its infant cargo was wrecked. Mordred alone survived. He was washed ashore, where he was found by a good man who reared him until he was fourteen.⁵¹

Similarly, "Merlin warned the king covertly that Guenever was not wholesome for him to take to wife, for he warned him that Launcelot should love her, and she him again".⁵² Launcelot's and Guinevere's illicit love eventually played havoc in Arthur's court.

Malory also relates that Merlin "warned the king to keep well his sword and the scabbard, for he told him how the sword and the scabbard should be stolen by a woman from him that he most trusted".⁵³ This prophecy was also fulfilled; Arthur's sister, Morgan le Fay, stole them and sent them to her paramour, Sir Accolon.⁵⁴

50. Ibid., p. 37.

Another prophecy referring to Merlin's death was made by the diviner to Arthur, at the interment of the twelve kings: "When I am dead these tapers shall burn no longer, and soon after the adventures of the Sangreal shall come among you and be achieved". Ibid., p. 59.

51. Ibid., p. 46.

52. Ibid., p. 71.

53. Ibid., p. 90.

54. Ibid., p. 100.

Merlin's predictions were not limited to King Arthur's future; he also prophesied concerning the future usefulness of Arthur's knights. When the young squire Griflet came to Arthur asking to be made a knight, Arthur demurred because of Griflet's youth. Griflet was so insistent, however, that not even Merlin's warning, "it were great pity to lose Griflet, for he will be a passing good man when he is of age, abiding with you the term of his life", ⁵⁵ deterred Arthur from knighting the young squire. Another of Merlin's prophecies concerned Pellinore: "Also there liveth not a bigger knight that he is one, and he shall hereafter do you right good service; and his name is Pellinore, and he shall have two sons that shall be passing good men; save one they shall have no fellow of prowess and of good living, and their names shall be Percivale of Wales and Lamerake of Wales, and he shall tell you the name of your own son begotten of your sister that shall be the destruction of all this realm", ⁵⁶ Another concerned Balin: "that knight that hath achieved the sword shall be destroyed by that sword, for the which will be great damage, for there liveth not a knight of more prowess than he is, and he shall do unto you, my Lord Arthur, great honour and kindness", ⁵⁷

55. Ibid., pp. 38-39.

56. Ibid., p. 42.

57. Ibid., p. 51.

Merlin also foretold events in which Arthur's knights would participate. To King Mark, who was standing by Lancelot's tomb, he said:

"Here shall be in this same place the greatest battle betwixt two knights that was or ever shall be, and the truest lovers, and yet none of them shall slay other. And there Merlin wrote their names upon the tomb with letters of gold that should fight in that place, whose names were Launcelot de Lake, and Tristram".⁵⁸

King Mark became curious regarding the identity of his informant, but without success: "At this time, said Merlin, I will not tell, but at that time when Sir Tristram is taken with his sovereign lady, then ye shall hear and know my name, and at that time ye shall hear tidings that shall not please you".⁵⁹

To Balin, who had killed Lancelot, whose death had resulted in Colombe's suicide, Merlin said: "because of the death of that lady thou shalt strike a stroke most dolorous that ever man struck, except the stroke of our Lord, for thou shalt hurt the truest knight and the man of most worship that now liveth, and through that stroke three kingdoms shall be in great poverty, misery and wretchedness twelve years, and the knight shall not be whole of that wound for many years".⁶⁰

58. Ibid., p. 54.

59. Ibid., p. 55.

60. Ibid.

Merlin made two predictions concerning Balin, in explaining the identity of Balin and Balan to Arthur:

"..it is Balin that achieved the sword, and his brother Balan, a good knight, there liveth not a better of prowess and of worthiness, and it shall be the greatest dole of him that ever I knew of knight, for he shall not long endure. Alas, said King Arthur, that is great pity; for I am much beholden unto him, and I have ill deserved it unto him for his kindness. Nay, said Merlin, he shall do much more for you, and that shall ye know in haste".⁶¹

After Balin's death Merlin prophesied as follows concerning this knight's sword: "there shall never man handle this sword but the best knight of the world, and that shall be Sir Launcelot or else Galahad his son, and Launcelot with this sword shall slay the man that in the world he loved best, that shall be Sir Gawaine".⁶²

Another prophecy of interest was made by Merlin concerning the knight who was to occupy the Siege Perilous: "But in the Siege Perilous there shall no man sit therein but one, and if there be any so hardy to do it he shall be destroyed, and he that shall sit there shall have no fellow".⁶³

Merlin predicted to the guests at Arthur and Guinevere's wedding feast that they would "see a strange and a marvellous adventure". His prediction came true

61. Ibid., pp. 56-57.

62. Ibid., pp. 69-70.

63. Ibid., p. 75.

immediately, for a hart, a brachet, and sixty hounds came running into the hall. They were followed by a lady pursuing her brachet, and a knight pursuing the lady. Merlin directed that Sir Gawaine be sent to bring back the hart; Sir Tor, to bring back both the brachet and the guest who had gone in pursuit; and Sir Pellinore, the lady and the knight. He predicted that they should "do marvellous adventures or they come again".⁶⁴

When Sir Tor returned from his quest and told the king and queen about his adventures, they "made great joy". Merlin assured them, however, that these were "but japes to that he shall do; for he shall prove a noble knight of prowess, as good as any is living, and gentle and courteous, and of good tatches, and passing true of his promise, and never shall outrage".⁶⁵

Merlin's prediction concerning Sir Pellinore when he returned from his quest was not so encouraging: "ye shall see your best friend fail you when ye be in the greatest distress that ever ye were or shall be".⁶⁶

The last prophecies made by Merlin before being imprisoned in the rock by Nimue concerned Launcelot, the young son of King Ban and Elaine, the latter of whom was sorrowing because of the war which King Claudas was waging against her husband:

64. Ibid., p. 76.

65. Ibid., p. 84.

66. Ibid., p. 89.

"Take none heaviness, said Merlin, for this same child within this twenty year shall revenge you on King Claudas, that all Christendom shall speak of it; and this same child shall be the most man of worship of the world, and his first name is Galahad, that know I well, said Merlin, and syne ye have confirmed him Launcelot. That is truth, said the queen, his first name was Galahad. O Merlin, said the queen, shall I live to see my son such a man of prowess? Yea, lady, on my peril ye shall see it, and live many winters after".⁶⁷

Although Merlin was the master of divination in Le Morte D'Arthur, others made use of it. The "damosel of the lake Nimue", to whom reference has just been made, foretold her ability to bring about the spell which she cast upon Sir Pelleas and Lady Ettard.⁶⁸ This same damsel who made use of enchantment for Arthur's protection came to his aid when he was about to fall a victim of Lady Annowre's sorcery, because she was also a diviner:

"Then the lady of the lake that was alway friendly to King Arthur, she understood by her subtle crafts that King Arthur was like to be destroyed. And therefore this lady of the lake that hight Nimue, came into that forest to seek after Sir Launcelot du Lake or Sir Tristram for to help King Arthur; foras that same day this lady of the lake knew

67. Ibid., p. 91.

68. Ibid., p. 122.

well that King Arthur should be slain, unless that he had help of one of these two knights".⁶⁹

The sword-girt damsel who was freed from her burden by Balin prophesied that he would do many marvels; but when her rescuer refused to return the sword to her, she said: "ye are not wise to keep the sword from me, for ye shall slay with the sword the best friend that ye have, and the man that he most love in the world, and the sword shall be your destruction".⁷⁰

Dame Brisen had prophesied that Launcelot, who was "clean out of his mind", would "be well holpen an but by miracle".⁷¹ Reference has already been made to his cure effected by the Holy Grail.⁷²

Of interest in this consideration of human agents of divination is a mechanical instrument serving the same purpose, a horn which served as a chastity test. This horn, sent to King Mark by Lamorak "in despite and reproof of Sir Tristram" for the purpose of assaying Queen Isoud, "had such a virtue that there might no lady nor gentlewoman drink of that horn but if she were true to her husband, and if she were false she should spill all the drink, and if she were true to her lord she might drink peaceable".⁷³ King Mark, at any rate, attached some importance to its power:

69. Ibid., p. 322.

70. Ibid., p. 48.

71. Le Morte D'Arthur, Vol. 2, p. 137.

72. See p. 22.

73. Le Morte D'Arthur, Vol. 1, pp. 286-287.

"Then the king made Queen Isoud to drink thereof, and an hundred ladies, and there were but four ladies of all those that drank clene. Alas, said King Mark, this is a great despite, and sware a great oath that she should be burnt and the other ladies. Then the barons gathered them together, and said plainly they would not have those ladies burnt for an horn made by sorcery, that came from as false a sorceress and witch as then was living".⁷⁴

In addition to the agents of divination already cited, a number of others, men of religion, letters of gold, and mysterious voices among them, were found in the chapters treating of the Holy Grail. Some of these will appear in a later section.⁷⁵

Frequent as agents of divination in Le Morte D'Arthur are, Merlin is the diviner par excellence. He needs not the tools of the British East African to induce credulity.⁷⁶

74. Ibid., p. 287.

75. Chapter III, Section F, Supernaturalism Connected with the Holy Grail.

76. See p. 9.

Chapter 111

E. Oneiromancy

Dreams play such a conspicuous role as agencies of divination in Le Morte D'Arthur that they deserve separate treatment.

Malory's characters took their dreams seriously. That they regarded them as symbolic is evident from the two passages which follow.

"The king with the hundred knights mette a wonder dream two nights afore the battle, that there blew a great wind, and blew down their castles and their towns, and after that came a water and bare it all away. All that heard of the sweven, said it was a token of great battle."⁷⁷

Later King Arthur was "sore abashed" at a dream in which a dragon and a boar figured prominently. He

"...sent anon for a wise philosopher, commanding to tell him the signification of his dream. Sir, said the philosopher, the dragon that thou dreamedst of betokeneth thine own person that sailest here, and the colour of his wings be thy realms that thou hast won, and his tail which is all to-tattered signifieth the noble knights of the Round Table; and the boar that the dragon slew coming from the cloude betokeneth some tyrant that tormenteth the people, or else thou art like to fight with some giant thyself, being

77. Le Morte D'Arthur, Vol. 1, p. 23.

horrible and abominable, whose peer
ye saw never in your days, wherefore
of this dreadful dream doubt thee
nothing, but as a conquerer come forth
thyself".⁷⁸

It is interesting to note that the passing of
three of the main characters, King Arthur, Queen Guinevere,
and Lancelot, was foretold in dreams. These will be con-
sidered in the order of their occurrence.

King Arthur and the traitorous Sir Mordred had
agreed upon a down near Salisbury as the place, and
Trinity Monday as the time, for a battle between their
armies. Malory's description of the dream that Arthur had
on the preceding night follows:

"King Arthur dreamed a wonderful dream,
and that was this: that him seemed he
sat upon a chaflet in a chair, and the
chair was fast to a wheel, and thereupon
sat King Arthur in the richest cloth of
gold that might be made; and the king
thought there was under him, far from
him, an hideous deep black water, and
therein were all manner of serpents,
and worms, and wild beasts, foul and
horrible; and suddenly the king thought
the wheel turned up so down, and he fell
among the serpents, and every beast took
him by a limb; and then the king cried as
he lay in his bed and slept: Help. And
then knights, squires, and yeomen, awaked
the king; and then he was so amazed that
he wist not where he was; and then he fell
on slumbering again, not sleeping nor
thoroughly waking. So the king seemed
verily that there came Sir Gawaine unto him
with a number of fair ladies with him. And

78. Ibid., p. 135.

when King Arthur saw him, then he said: Welcome, my sister's son; I weened thou hadst been dead, and now I see thee on live, much am I beholding unto almighty Jesu. O, fair nephew and my sister's son, what be these ladies that hither be come with you? Sir, said Sir Gawaine, all these be ladies for whom I have foughten when I was man living, and all these are those that I did battle for in righteous quarrel; and God hath given them that grace at their great prayer, by cause I did battle for them, that they should bring me hither unto you: thus much hath God given me leave, for to warn you of your death; for an ye fight as tomorn with Sir Mordred, as ye both have assigned, doubt ye not ye must be slain, and the most part of your people on both parties. And for the great grace and goodness that almighty Jesu hath unto you, and for pity of you, and many more other good men there shall be slain, God hath sent me to you of his special grace, to give you warning that in no wise ye do battle as tomorn, but that ye take a treaty for a month day; and proffer you largely, so as tomorn to be put in a delay. For within a month shall come Sir Launcelot with all his noble knights, and rescue you worshipfully, and slay Sir Mordred, and all that ever will hold with him. Then Sir Gawaine and all the ladies vanished".⁷⁹

That Arthur heeded the dream is evident, for Malory writes that "the king commanded Sir Lucan the Butler, and his brother Sir Bedivere, with two bishops with them, and charged them in any wise, an they might, Take a treaty for a month day with Sir Mordred, and spare not, proffer him lands and goods as much as ye think best".⁸⁰

79. Le Morte D'Arthur, Vol. 2, pp. 384-385.

80. Ibid., p. 385.

Mordred agreed to a treaty, as well as to a conference. Before conferring, each leader, suspicious of the other, told his men what to do if they saw an opponent draw a sword. Although the leaders were in perfect accord, the consultation ended disastrously, for, as Malory writes:

"Right soon came an adder out of a little heath bush, and it stung a knight on the foot. And when the knight felt him stung, he looked down and saw the adder, and then he drew his sword to slay the adder, and thought of none other harm. And when the host on both parties saw that sword drawn, then they blew beaumes, trumpets, and horns, and shouted grimly. And so both hosts dresseded them together".⁸¹

Arthur's exclamation, "Alas this unhappy day!" bears evidence of the fact that his dream had not been forgotten.

During the battle which followed, Gawaine's prophecy was fulfilled. A hundred thousand men were slain; Arthur killed Mordred and was, himself, mortally wounded by Mordred.

When Launcelot returned to England and found that Arthur had been slain and that Guinevere had entered a nunnery, he entered the service of the Church, where he later became a priest. It was while he was leading a pious life that he had a vision in which Guinevere's death was pre-saged. Malory describes it in these words:

81. Ibid., p. 386.

"And thus upon a night, there came a vision to Sir Launcelot, and charged him, in remission of his sins, to haste him unto Almesbury: And by then thou come there, thou shalt find Queen Guenever dead. And therefore take thy fellows with thee, and purvey them of an horse bier, and fetch thou the corpse of her, and bury her by her husband, the noble King Arthur. So this advison come to Sir Launcelot thrice in one night".⁸²

Launcelot sought the advice of a hermit who counselled him to obey the vision. When he reached the nunnery, Guinevere had been dead for half an hour. Strange to say, Guinevere had told her companions there that Launcelot was then on his way to the nunnery to get her corpse, which he was going to bury next to King Arthur.

After the death of the King and the Queen, Launcelot was disconsolate; the efforts of all of his friends failed to comfort him. He became ill and prayed that his body be taken to Joyous Gard for burial. That very night, as the story goes,

"...the Bishop that was hermit, as he lay in his bed asleep, he fell upon a great laughter. And therewithal the fellowship awoke, and came to the Bishop, and asked him what he ailed. Ah Jesu mercy, said the Bishop, why did ye awake me? I was never in all my life so merry and so well at ease. Wherefore? said Sir Bors. Truly, said the Bishop, here was Sir Launcelot with me with more angels than ever I saw men in one day. And I saw the angels heave up Sir Launcelot unto heaven, and the gates of heaven opened

82. Ibid., pp. 396-397.

against him. It is but dretching of
 swevens, said Sir Bors, for I doubt not
 Sir Launcelot aileth nothing but good.
 It may well be, said the Bishop; go ye
 to his bed, and then shall ye prove the
 sooth. So when Sir Bors and his fellows
 came to his bed they found him stark dead,
 and he lay as he had smiled, and the sweet-
 est savour about him that ever they felt".⁸³

Numerous other dreams are to be found in Malory in
 connection with the Holy Grail. Enough have been given here,
 however, to show that Malory's characters regarded them as
 premonitory. In this respect they are not unlike the Orang
 Laut or Sea-Jakun who, according to Skeat and Blagden,

"...declare that their ancestors were warned
 in dreams that if the race took to bathing
 they would be visited by tempests. Hence
 they abstain as religiously from bathing
 as they do from eating the fowl".⁸⁴

83. Ibid., p. 399.

84. Skeat and Blagden, Pagan Races of the Malay Peninsula,
 Vol. 2, pp. 367-368.

Chapter III

F. Supernaturalism Connected with the Holy Grail

Nowhere is the marvellous element so much in evidence as in the Holy Grail chapters, for here are to be found therapeutic magic, enchantment, divination, oneiromancy, and other kinds of supernaturalism not previously considered in this study.

It will be remembered that Merlin had made the following prophecy concerning the empty place at Arthur's Round Table: "But in the Siege Perilous there shall no man sit therein but one, and if there be any so hardy to do it he shall be destroyed, and he that shall sit there shall have no fellow".⁸⁵ Before Galahad's birth a hermit came to Arthur on Whitsunday and further prophesied to him and the knights of the Round Table concerning the person who was to occupy the vacant seat: "for he that shall sit there is unborn and ungotten, and this same year he shall be gotten that shall sit there in that siege perilous, and he shall win the Sangreal".⁸⁶

Shortly after this prophecy was made, Sir Launcelot rode forth in search of adventure. After a time he crossed "the pounte of Corbin" and was joyfully received by the people of the town, who cried: "Welcome, Sir Launcelot du Lake, the flower of all knighthood, for by thee all we shall be holpen

85. See p. 36.

86. Le Morte D'Arthur, Vol. 2, p. 124.

out of danger".⁸⁷ In response to his inquiry regarding the demonstration, they replied: "Ah, fair knight.... here is within this tower a dolorous lady that hath been there in pains many winters and days, for ever she boileth in scalding water".⁸⁸ They were confident that Launcelot was destined to deliver her. The story of her rescue and the cause of her plight follow:

"Then they brought Sir Launcelot into the tower; and when he came to the chamber thereas this lady was, the doors of iron unlocked and unbolted. And so Sir Launcelot went into the chamber that was as hot as any stew. And there Sir Launcelot took the fairest lady by the hand that ever he saw, and she was naked as a needle; and by enchantment Queen Morgan le Fay and the Queen of Northgalis had put her there in that pains, by cause she was called the fairest lady of that country; and there she had been five years, and never might she be delivered out of her great pains unto the time the best knight of the world had taken her by the hand. Then the people brought her clothes".⁸⁹

After the townspeople had given "thankings unto God" and to Sir Launcelot for the release of the dolorous lady, they made another request of her deliverer: "Sir knight, syn ye have delivered this lady, ye shall deliver us from a serpent there is here in a tomb".⁹⁰

87. Ibid.

88. Ibid., p. 125.

89. Ibid.

90. Ibid.

Reaching the tomb, Launcelot saw these words written thereon in letters of gold: "Here shall come a leopard of king's blood, and he shall slay this serpent, and this leopard shall engender a lion in this foreign country, the which lion shall pass all other knights".⁹¹ When Launcelot lifted the tomb, out came "an horrible and a fiendly dragon, spitting fire out of his mouth". Launcelot killed the dragon with great difficulty. He was then greeted by King Pellès, father of Elaine and "cousin nigh unto Joseph of Armathie". The salutation over, the two "went into the castle to take their repast", during which the Holy Grail was brought in. Malory gives this account of its appearance:

"And anon there came in a dove at a window, and in her mouth there seemed a little censer of gold. And therewithal there was such a savour as all the spicery of the world had been there. And forthwithal there was upon the table all manner of meats and drinks that they could think upon. So came in a damosel passing fair and young, and she bare a vessel of gold betwixt her hands; and thereto the king kneeled devoutly, and said his prayers, and so did all that were there. O Jesu, said Sir Launcelot, what may this mean? This is, said the king, the richest thing that any man hath living. And when this thing goeth about, the Round Table shall be broken; and wit thou well, said the king, this is the holy Sangreal that ye have here seen".⁹²

Now King Pellès was anxious to bring about a liaison between Launcelot and Elaine; for he "knew well that Sir

91. Ibid.

92. Ibid., p. 126.

Launcelot should get a child upon his daughter, the which should be named Sir Galahad the good knight, by whom all the foreign country should be brought out of danger, and by him the Holy Greal should be achieved".⁹³ Dame Brisen helped King Pelles accomplish his purpose by deception, making Launcelot believe that his companion Elaine, who "knew that same night should be gotten upon her Galahad that should prove the best knight of the world",⁹⁴ was Queen Guinevere, the only object of Launcelot's love. Launcelot was angry the next morning when he realized that he had been duped and planned to wreak vengeance upon Dame Brisen.

Soon after Galahad was born, Sir Bors de Ganis, a nephew of Sir Launcelot, came to Pelles's castle. He rejoiced when he found that Sir Launcelot was the child's father and "prayed to God it might prove as good a knight as his father was".⁹⁵ Just as he finished his prayer, the dove bearing the gold censer and the maiden bearing the Holy Grail appeared as they had when Launcelot was being entertained at Corbin; again there were "all manner of meats and drinks" and a sweet savour, but this time the maiden spoke, saying: "Wit you well, Sir Bors, that this child is Galahad,

93. Ibid.

94. Ibid., p. 127.

95. Ibid., pp. 129-130.

that shall sit in the siege perilous, and achieve the Sangreal, and he shall be much better than ever was Sir Launcelot du Lake, this is his own father".⁹⁶ The dove soon flew away, and the maiden vanished; but Sir Bors was so fascinated by his strange experiences that he decided to remain in the castle all night, in spite of King Pelles's advice.

After being confessed, he went to bed; and "right so he saw come in a light, that he might well see a spear great and long that came straight upon him pointling, and to Sir Bors seemed that the head of the spear brent like a taper".⁹⁷ This spear wounded Sir Bors grievously; but, in spite of his wound, he answered the challenge of a knight who soon appeared. After a struggle, the knight yielded, but Sir Bors's adventures were not over:

"And then Sir Bors laid him down to rest, and then he heard and felt much noise in that chamber; and then Sir Bors espied that there came in, he wist not whether at the doors nor windows, shot of arrows and of quarrels so thick that he marvelled, and many fell upon him and hurt him in the bare places. And then Sir Bors was ware where came in an hideous lion; so Sir Bors dressed him unto the lion, and anon the lion bereft him his shield, and with his sword Sir Bors smote off the lion's head. Right so Sir Bors forthwithal saw a dragon in the court passing horrible, and there

96. Ibid., p. 130.

97. Ibid.

seemed letters of gold written in his forehead; and Sir Bors thought that the letters made a signification of King Arthur. Right so there came an horrible leopard and an old, and there they fought long, and did great battle together. And at the last the dragon spit out of his mouth as it had been an hundred dragons; and lightly all the small dragons slew the old dragon and tare him all to pieces. Anon withal there came an old man into the hall, and he sat him down in a fair chair, and there seemed to be two adders about his neck; and then the old man had an harp, and there he sang an old song how Joseph of Aramathie came into this land. Then when he had sung, the old man bad Sir Bors go from thence. For here shall ye have no more adventures; and full worshipfully have ye done, and better shall ye do hereafter. And then Sir Bors seemed that there came the whitest dove with a little golden censer in her mouth. And anon therewithal the tempest ceased and passed, that afore was marvellous to hear. So was all that court full of good savours. Then Sir Bors saw four children bearing four fair tapers, and an old man in the midde of the children with an censer in his own hand, and a spear in his other hand, and that spear was called the spear of vengeance....

Now, said that old man to Sir Bors, go ye to your cousin, Sir Launcelot, and tell him of this adventure the which had been most convenient for him of all earthly knights; but sin is so foul in him he may not achieve such holy deeds, for had not been his sin he had passed all the knights that ever were in his days; and tell thou Sir Launcelot, of all worldly adventures he passeth in manhood and prowess all other, but in this spiritual matters he shall have many his better. And then Sir Bors saw four gentlewomen come by him, purely bisene; and he saw where that they entered into

a chamber where was great light as it were a summer light; and the women kneeled down afore an altar of silver with four pillars, and as it had been a bishop kneeled down afore that table of silver. And as Sir Bors looked over his head he saw a sword like silver naked hoving over his head, and the clereness thereof smote so in his eyes that as at that time Sir Bors was blind; and there he heard a voice that said: Go hence, thou Sir Bors, for as yet thou art not worthy for to be in this place".⁹⁸

The next morning he left Corbin and went to Camelot, where he told Sir Launcelot of his adventures.

Later Sir Bors, accompanied by Sir Ector and Sir Lionel, went in search of Sir Launcelot, who had lost his mind after being severely rebuked by the Queen. After a two-year search Bors and Lionel returned during the feast of Pentecost. Meanwhile Sir Launcelot, cured of his insanity, had been found by Sir Ector and Sir Perceval, and had returned with them to Camelot.

The places at the Round Table were all assigned, with the exception of the Siege Perilous in which had been newly written in letters of gold these words: "Four hundred winters and four and fifty accomplished after the passion of our Lord Jesu Christ ought this siege to be fulfilled".⁹⁹ According to Launcelot's computation, the allotted time had passed; and it was at this feast that the occupant would appear. At his suggestion the inscription was covered over.

98. Ibid., pp. 131-132.

99. Ibid., p. 165.

King Arthur had invited the knights in to dinner, when he was reminded that it was his custom not to eat on the day of Pentecost until he had seen some adventure. They had not long to wait, however, for a squire came in, announcing that he had seen a great stone, in which a sword was stuck, float on the river. The king and his knights went to see this wonder. On the jewelled pommel of the sword were these words: "Never shall man take me hence, but only he by whose side I ought to hang, and he shall be the best knight of the world".¹⁰⁰ When King Arthur suggested that the sword ought to belong to Launcelot, he refused to claim it, adding:

"Also, who that assayeth to take the sword and faileth of it, he shall receive a wound by that sword that he shall not be whole long after. And I will that ye wit that this same day shall the adventures of the Sangreal, that is called the Holy Vessel, begin".¹⁰¹

In spite of Sir Launcelot's warning, Sir Gawaine, Sir Perceval, and others tried to remove the sword, but without success.

The king and his knights then returned to the court. After they had been served, a most remarkable happening occurred - "all the doors and windows of the palace shut by themselves". Soon after appeared two knights, a young man and an old one who, after saluting the assemblage, addressed the king with these words: "Sir, I bring here a young knight, the which is

100. Ibid., p. 166.

101. Ibid.

of king's lineage, and of the kindred of Joseph of Aramathie, whereby the marvels of this court, and of strange realms, shall be fully accomplished".¹⁰²

After the King had welcomed them, the old knight led his companion to the Siege Perilous, removed the silk cloth, saw the words, "This is the siege of Galahad, the haut prince", and assured the young knight that the place was his. He then departed. Malory describes the impression made by Galahad upon Arthur's knights as follows: "Then all the knights of the Table Round marvelled greatly of Sir Galahad, that he durst sit there in that Siege Perilous, and was so tender of age; and wist not from whence he came but all only by God; and said: This is he by whom the Sangreal shall be achieved, for there sat never none but he, but he were mischieved".¹⁰³

After King Arthur had welcomed Galahad with these words, "Sir, ye be welcome, for ye shall move many good knights to the quest of the Sangreal, and ye shall achieve that never knights might bring to an end",¹⁰⁴ he took the young knight to see the marvellous stone and told him of the failure of some of his knights to withdraw it. The young knight expressed no surprise at this information, however, saying,

102. Ibid., p. 167.

103. Ibid., p. 168.

104. Ibid.

that the adventure was his; therefore he had brought no sword with him, only a scabbard. He then drew the sword¹⁰⁵ from the stone with ease. In a tournament which followed, arranged by King Arthur for the purpose of testing the young knight, Galahad eclipsed all others.

Malory's account of the wonders which befell at supper that evening follows:

"Then anon they heard cracking and crying of thunder, that them thought the place should all to drive. In the midst of this blast entered a sunbeam more clearer by seven times than ever they saw day, and all they were alighted of the grace of the Holy Ghost. Then began every knight to behold other, and either saw other, by their seeming, fairer than ever they saw afore. Not for then there was no knight might speak one word a great while, and so they looked every man on other as they

105. Reference has already been made in the section on Therapeutic Magic (see p. 22) to the shield which was given Galahad soon after he had set out upon his quest. This shield bore a red cross on a white ground. The knight who sent it to Sir Galahad told him that Joseph of Arimathaea, in response to King Evelake's request for a token, had made a cross on the shield with his blood, saying: "Now may ye see a remembrance that I love you, for ye shall never see this shield but ye shall think on me, and it shall be always as fresh as it is now. And never shall man bear this shield about his neck but he shall repent it, unto the time that Galahad, the good knight, bare it; and the last of my lineage shall have it about his neck, that shall do many marvellous deede". (Cf. Le Morte D'Arthur, Vol. 2, p. 178.)

had been dumb. Then there entered into the hall the Holy Greal covered with white samite, but there was none might see it, nor who bare it. And there was all the hall fulfilled with good odours, and every knight had such meats and drinks as he best loved in this world. And when the Holy Greal had been borne through the hall, then the Holy Vessel departed suddenly, that they wist not where it became: then had they all breath to speak".¹⁰⁶

Gawaine was the first to make the vow "that tomorn, without longer abiding, I shall labour in the quest of the Sangreal, that I shall hold me out a twelvemonth and a day, or more if need be, and never shall I return again unto the court till I have seen it more openly than it hath been seen here; and if I may not speed I shall return again as he that may not be against the will of our Lord Jesu Christ".¹⁰⁷

Immediately most of Arthur's knights made similar vows. Their decision made Arthur sad, for he feared that they would "never meet more in this world".

Some of the ladies of the court would have accompanied their lovers on the quest, except for the warning of an old knight: "Fair lords, which have sworn in the quest of the Sangreal, thus sendeth you Macien, the hermit, word, that none in this quest lead lady nor gentlewoman with him, for it is not to do in so high a service as they labour in; for I warn you plain, he that is not clean of his sins

^{106.} Le Morte D'Arthur, Vol. 2, p. 171.

^{107.} Ibid., pp. 171-172.

he shall not see the mysteries of our Lord Jesu Christ",¹⁰⁸

Launcelot, so successful in worldly adventures, was told by a man of religion that his sin would prevent him from seeing the Holy Grail. When Launcelot asked the man's advice, he gave him some of the hair¹⁰⁹ of a dead holy man, directing him to put it next to his skin; and charged him to "eat no flesh", to "drink no wine", and to "hear mass daily" if possible, while in the quest of the Holy Grail.¹¹⁰

108. Ibid., p. 173.

109. This use of the dead man's hair suggests a practice cited by Spencer and Gillen (Cf. The Northern Tribes of Central Australia, pp. 476-477): "Throughout the whole of the tribes studied by us...the hair of the head is wholly or partly removed immediately after death and used for magic purposes.. In each case the hair is made into some..sacred object... which is taken out by the avenger of the dead man...Such hair is always kept because it is supposed to be endowed with the attributes of the dead man, and therefore to give special power to its possessor".

110. A remarkable incident occurred while Launcelot was the guest of this man of religion. In the chapel there was a corpse clad "in a white shirt of passing fine cloth", which Launcelot's host considered unmerited because the dead man had broken a law of the order. To settle his doubt, he conjured a fiend, "an hideous figure and horrible", who told him that the dead man was "not lost but saved". The fiend also told of an attempt which had been made to slay this man, but "there would no sword bite on him more than upon a gad of steel, for the high Lord which he served he him preserved". His enemies had then removed his clothes and the hair from his back. They had put this shirt on him and had thrown him into the fire, where, after remaining alive for hours, he was found dead the next morning; but neither his skin nor the shirt appeared damaged. When the fiend had finished his story, he disappeared in a tempest. It was this dead man's hair that the man of religion directed Launcelot to use (cf. Le Morte D'Arthur, Vol. 2, pp. 205-207).

One hundred and fifty of Arthur's knights went in quest of the Holy Grail, but only three were successful. The outcome of the quest was foretold in a dream which Sir Gawaine had: 111

"Sir Gawaine him seemed he came into a meadow full of herbs and flowers, and there he saw a rack of bulls, an hundred and fifty, that were proud and black, save three of them were all white, and one had a black spot, and the other two were so fair and so white that they might be no whiter. And these three bulls which were so fair were tied with two strong cords. And the remnant of the bulls said among them: Go we hence to seek better pasture. And so some went, and some came again, but they were so lean that they might not stand upright; and of the bulls that were so white, that one came again and no more. But when this white bull was come again among these other there rose up a great cry for lack of wind that failed them; and so they departed one here and another there; this advision befell Gawaine that night". 112

A hermit gave the dream the following interpretation:

"Sir, said the hermit unto Sir Gawaine, the fair meadow and the rack therein

111. During a conversation which Sir Perceval had with his aunt, a recluse, this same outcome was suggested. She told Perceval that Merlin had told the people who asked him how those who would be successful in the quest of the Holy Grail might be known that "there should be three white bulls that should achieve it, and the two should be maidens, and the third should be chaste. And that one of the three should pass his father as much as the lion passeth the leopard, both of strength and hardiness". (Cf. *ibid.*, p. 194.)

112. *Ibid.*, p. 214.

ought to be understood the Round Table, and by the meadow ought to be understood humility and patience, those be the things which be always green and quick...At the rack ate an hundred and fifty bulls; but they ate not in the meadow, for their hearts should be set in humility and patience, and the bulls were proud and black save only three. By the bulls is to understand the fellowship of the Round Table, which for their sin and their wickedness be black... And the three bulls which were white save only one that was spotted: the two white betoken Sir Galahad and Sir Percivale, for they be maidens olene and without spot; and the third that had a spot signifieth Sir Bors de Ganis, which trespassed but once in his virginity, but eithen he kept himself so well in chastity that all is forgiven him and his misdeeds. And why those three were tied by the necks, they be three knights in virginity and chastity, and there is no pride omitted in them. And the black bulls which said: Go we hence, they are those which at Pentecost at the high feast took upon them to go in the quest of the Sangreal without confession: they might not enter in the meadow of humility and patience. And therefore they returned into waste countries, that signifieth death, for there shall die many of them: every each of them shall slay other for sin, and they that shall escape shall be so lean that it shall be marvel to see them. And of the three bulls without spot, the one shall come again, and the other two never".¹¹³

Sir Bors de Ganis, Sir Perceval, and Sir Galahad, the three knights who were successful in their search for the Holy Grail, experienced the strangest adventures, some of which are given in the following pages. The following befell Sir Bors, whose success in the quest had been foretold by a hermit on the

113. Ibid., pp. 217-218.

preceding night; it is of especial interest because of the allegorical interpretation given it by an abbot:

"And so a little from thence he looked up into a tree, and there he saw a passing great bird upon an old tree, and it was passing dry, without leaves; and the bird sat above, and had birds, the which were dead for hunger. So smote he himself with his beak, the which was great and sharp. And so the great bird bled till that he died among his birds. And the young birds took the life by the blood of the great bird. When Bors saw this he wist well it was a great tokening; for when he saw the great bird arose not, then he took his horse and yede his way".¹¹⁴

The abbot's interpretation is given below:

"Our Lord Jesu Christ showed him unto you in the likeness of a soul that suffered great anguish for us, syns He was put upon the cross, and bled His heart blood for mankind: there was the token and the likeness of the Sangreal that appeared afore you, for the blood that the great fowl bled revived the chickens from death to life. And by the bare tree is betokened the world which is naked and without fruit but if it come of Our Lord".¹¹⁵

More remarkable is the experience which Sir Bors had when he refused to yield to the entreaties of a lady who loved him. Saying that he would see how she would die for his love, she with her twelve gentlewomen climbed up to a battlement. Bors saw them and pitied them, but remained adamant. They then fell to the earth. Bors blessed himself,

114. *Ibid.*, pp. 220-221.

115. *Ibid.*, p. 229.

and soon "he heard a great noise and a great cry, as though all the fiends of hell had been about him; and therewith he saw neither tower nor lady, nor gentlewoman", 116

The experience which follows occurred just as Sir Bors was about to strike his brother in self-defense, and is somewhat suggestive of the apostle Paul's vision on the road to Damascus:

"And then he heard a voice that said: Flee Bors, and touch him not, or else thou shalt slay him. Right so alit a cloud betwixt them in likeness of a fire and a marvellous flame, that both their two shields burnt. Then were they sore afraid, that they fell both to the earth, and lay there a great while in a swoon. And when they came to themselves, Bors saw that his brother had no harm; then he held up both his hands, for he dread God had taken vengeance upon him. With that he heard a voice say: Bors, go hence, and bear thy brother no longer fellowship, but take thy way anon right to the sea, for Sir Percivale abideth thee there", 117

Sir Bors asked Sir Lionel's forgiveness, which he secured, and then went towards the sea. While he slept in an abbey that night, he again heard a voice directing him to go to the sea. When he reached the shore, he saw a ship which he boarded. It then "went so fast that him seemed the ship went flying". The next morning he found Sir Perceval; only Sir Galahad was missing.

Sir Perceval also experienced many strange adventures

116. Ibid., p. 228.

117. Ibid., pp. 234-235.

while seeking Sir Galahad. During a battle he had the misfortune to lose his horse. That night he awoke at midnight to see a woman before him, who promised to lend him her horse if he would do her will. This horse was a remarkable creature, for "within an hour and less he bare him four days' journey thence, until he came to a rough water the which roared, and his horse would have borne him into it". Doubting whether he could cross the troubled waters, Sir Perceval made the sign of the cross on his forehead. The story continues:

"When the fiend felt him so charged he shook off Sir Percivale, and he went into the water crying and roaring, making great sorrow, and it seemed unto him that the water brent. Then Sir Percivale perceived it was a fiend, the which would have brought him unto his perdition. Then he commended himself unto God, and prayed Our Lord to keep him from all such temptations; and so he prayed all that night till on the morn that it was day; then he saw that he was in a wild mountain the which was closed with the sea nigh all about, that he might see no land about him which might relieve him, but wild beasts".¹¹⁸

Soon Sir Perceval saw a young serpent carrying a young lion. Immediately an old lion came roaring after the serpent and began fighting it. The knight dealt the reptile a blow, and immediately the lion became his friend. That night while they slept together, Sir Perceval dreamed that two ladies came to him. It seemed to him that the younger one, who rode

118. Ibid., p. 198.

upon a lion, told him that her master bad him prepare to fight the strongest champion of the world on the following day. The old woman, who rode upon a serpent, rebuked Sir Perceval for having killed her serpent the preceding day. When he offered to make amends, she suggested that he become her man; but he refused.

The following day there came over the sea a ship, covered with white samite, bearing an old man who told Sir Perceval that he had come to comfort him. He interpreted Perceval's dream as follows:

"She which rode upon the lion betokeneth the new law of holy church, that is to understand, faith, good hope, belief, and baptism. For she seemed younger than the other it is great reason, for she was born in the resurrection and the passion of our Lord Jesu Christ. And for great love she came to thee to warn thee of thy great battle that shall befall thee..And she that rode on the serpent signifieth the old law, and that serpent betokeneth a fiend. And why she blamed thee that thou slewest her servant, it betokeneth nothing; the serpent that thou slewest betokeneth the devil that thou rodeest upon to the rock. And when thou madest a sign of the cross, there thou slewest him, and put away his power. And when she asked thee amends and to become her man, and thou saidst thou wouldst not, that was to make thee to believe on her and leave thy baptism".¹¹⁹

After commanding the knight to leave the place, the old man jumped upon the ship; whereupon both ship and man vanished.

At noon Sir Perceval saw another ship, which

119. Ibid., pp. 200-201.

"came rowing in the sea as all the wind of the world had driven it". It was covered with black silk and in it there was a "gentlewoman of great beauty", who offered to bring him to Sir Galahad if he would do her will. In answer to her inquiry Sir Perceval told the gentlewoman that he had eaten no meat for almost three days, but had been refreshed by the words of an old man. The woman said that this old man was "an enchanter and a multiplier of words", and threatened that Sir Perceval would die of starvation there if he believed what the old man had said. She told Sir Perceval that she had been disinherited, and enlisted his help. After he had rested, Sir Perceval asked the woman if she had any meat. She provided "all manner of meats that he could think on" and "the strongest wine that ever he drank, him thought, and therewith he was a little chafed more than he ought to be". When he looked at the gentlewoman, he thought her the fairest creature he had ever seen. Sir Perceval offered his love, but she refused in order to make him more ardent. Later when he agreed to be her true servant and to do only what she commanded, she yielded. Sir Perceval was about to sin when the following events occurred:

"..by adventure and grace he saw his sword lie on the ground naked, in whose pommel was a red cross and the sign of

the crucifix therein, and bethought him on his knighthood and his promise made toforehand unto the good man; then he made a sign of the cross in his forehead, and therewith the pavilion turned up so down, and then it changed unto a smoke, and a black cloud, and then he was adread and cried aloud....

"Fair sweet father, Jesu Christ, ne let me not be shamed, the which was nigh lost had not thy good grace been. And then he looked into a ship, and saw her enter therein, which said: Sir Percivale, ye have betrayed me. And so she went with the wind roaring and yelling, that it seemed all the water brent after her. Then Sir Percivale made great sorrow, and drew his sword unto him, saying: Sithen my flesh will be my master I shall punish it; and therewith he rove himself through the thigh that the blood start about him, and said: O good Lord, take this in recompensation of that I have done against thee, my Lord".¹²⁰

While he was in the throes of repentance, the ship returned; on it was the old man who told Sir Perceval that the 'gentlewoman was the master fiend of hell, the which hath power above all devils, and that was the old lady that thou sawest in thine advision riding on the serpent" and "the champion that thou foughtest withal, the which had overcome thee had not the grace of God been".¹²¹ After the old man vanished, Perceval went away on the ship.

Sir Galahad, too, had strange experiences in the quest of the Holy Grail. Just after receiving his shield, he returned to the abbey where he had spent the preceding night and was led by a monk into a churchyard where he heard a

120. Ibid., pp. 203-204.

121. Ibid., pp. 204-205.

maddening noise. He was directed to lift a tomb and, as he did so, he heard these words: "Sir Galahad, the servant of Jesu Christ, come thou not nigh me, for thou shalt make me go again there where I have been so long".¹²² Unafraid, Galahad lifted the stone. Out came a foul smoke, followed by the "foulest figure...that ever he saw in the likeness of a man", which Galahad took for a fiend. He again heard a voice, saying, "Galahad, I see there environ about thee so many angels that my power may not dare thee".¹²³ Seeing an armed corpse in the grave, Galahad suggested that they move this corpse, the remains of a "false Christian man", for it was not worthy of remaining in a churchyard. Later a good man explained to Galahad that the "covered body betokeneth the disease of the world, and the great sin that our Lord found in the world".

One night a gentlewoman, who afterwards proved to be Sir Perceval's sister, came to the hermitage where Galahad was spending the night and asked him to arm himself, mount his horse, and follow her, for she would show him within three days "the highest adventure that ever any knight saw". They came at length to the ship, where they were joyfully received by Sir Bors and Sir Perceval.

The ship then moved through the water at a rapid rate and brought them to another wharf, which the gentlewoman

122. Ibid., p. 178.

123. Ibid., p. 179.

suggested that they board, for it was the Lord's will that they would experience marvellous adventures there. They found no people on this second ship, but two letters which contained a warning: "Thou man, which shall enter into this ship, beware thou be in steadfast belief, for I am Faith, and therefore beware how thou enterest, for an thou fail I shall not help thee".¹²⁴ One of the wonders, found by Galahad at the foot of a bed, was a sword, on the haft of which were scales made of the ribs of two animals, the bone of one having "such a virtue that there is no hand that handleth him shall never be weary nor hurt"; the bones of the other being of such "kind that who that handleth them shall have so much will that he shall never be weary, and he shall not think on joy nor sorrow that he hath had, but only that thing that he beholdeth before him".¹²⁵ Moreover, this sword was to be handled only by one who should surpass all others. Both Perceval and Bors attempted to grip it, but without success. Letters on the girdle proclaimed that its rightful wearer should "be shamed in no place while... girt with this girdle".¹²⁶

Sir Perceval's sister told remarkable stories of

124. Ibid., p. 238.

125. Ibid., p. 239.

126. Ibid., p. 241.

adventures which had befallen those who had ventured to grip the sword. When Pelles had attempted to draw it, he had been wounded by a spear and would not be healed until they reached him. She further told them that the ship had been built by King Solomon, influenced by a prophecy and aided by his wife, who had also directed him to get his father's sword from the temple and to remodel it, promising that she would make a girdle for it.

Solomon's wife had also had the bed built. Following her direction, the carpenter cut wood for one of the spindles from the tree under which Abel had been slain, and from which came drops of blood as the carpenter cut it. The cover which she had made for the ship was of "silk that should never rot". Sir Perceval's sister also told how King Solomon, after the ship had been completed, lay down to sleep and while asleep it seemed that he saw an angel make letters on the sword, and also letters on the ship that said: "Thou man that wilt enter within me, beware that thou be full within the faith, for I ne am but Faith and Belief".¹²⁷ Abashed, King Solomon had drawn back, and the ship had disappeared. He then had heard a voice say: "Solomon, the last knight of thy lineage shall rest in this bed".¹²⁸

127. Ibid., p. 245.

128. Ibid., p. 246.

A purse which the knights found contained a note giving information about the ship and the spindles. Sir Perceval's sister provided a new girdle for the sword, in making which she had used her own hair that had been cut when she found that "this adventure was ordained" her. She also furnished a name for the sword and sheath: "the name of the sword is the Sword with the strange girdles; and the sheath, mover of blood; for no man that hath blood in him ne shall never see the one part of the sheath which was made of the tree of life".¹²⁹ At the request of his companions Sir Galahad allowed himself to be girt with this sword; whereupon they returned to their ship, which the wind drove on.

The ship came the next morning to the castle Carteloise, where they were attacked by armed knights, many of whom they killed. When they saw the great number slain, they believed themselves sinners. A priest, bearing "God's body in a cup", considered the slaying of them "an alms deed". Among the slain knights were the three sons of Earl Hernox, who had mistreated both the priest and their father. The earl had told the priest to bear their treatment, for "they should not long endure, for three servants of Our Lord should destroy them". The

129. Ibid., p. 246.

earl was brought into the hall and "knew Galahad anon, and yet he saw him never afore but by revelation of Our Lord".¹³⁰ The earl had long awaited the coming of Galahad and requested the knight to hold him in his arms, that his soul might leave his body "in so good a man's arms". Galahad agreed. Then a voice was heard by all to say:

"Galahad, well hast thou avenged me on God's enemies. Now behoveth thee to go to the maimed king as soon as thou mayest, for he shall receive by thee health which he hath abiden so long".¹³¹

After the earl's death the three knights and Sir Perceval's sister left the castle. As they passed through a forest, they saw a white hart led by four lions, which they followed to a hermitage. At mass Sir Bors, Sir Perceval, and Sir Galahad beheld prodigious sights:

"And at the secrets of the mass they three saw the hart become a man, the which marvelled them, and set them upon the altar in a rich siege; and saw the four lions were changed, the one to the form of a man, the other to the form of a lion, and the third to an eagle, and the fourth was changed unto an ox. Then took they their siege where the hart sat, and went out through a glass window, and there was nothing perished nor broken; and they heard a voice say: In such a manner entered the Son of God in the womb of a maid Mary, whose virginity ne was perished ne hurt".¹³²

When they prayed the good man "that he would say them truth",

130. Ibid., p. 248.

131. Ibid., p. 249.

132. Ibid.

he asked what they had seen. They told him; thereupon he said:

"Ah lords....ye be welcome; now wot I well ye be the good knights the which shall bring the Sangreal to an end; for ye be they unto whom Our Lord shall shew great secrets. And well ought Our Lord be signified to an hart, for the hart when he is old he waxeth young again in his white skin. Right so cometh again Our Lord from death to life, for He lost earthly flesh that was the deadly flesh, which He had taken in the womb of the blessed Virgin Mary; and for that cause appeared Our Lord as a white hart without spot. And the four that were with Him is to understand the four evangelists which set in writing a part of Jesu Christ's deeds that He did sometime when He was among you an earthly man; for wit ye well never erst ne might no knight know the truth, for ofttimes or this Our Lord showed Him unto good men and unto good knights, in likeness of an hart, but I suppose from henceforth ye shall see no more".¹³³

The next morning the three knights, accompanied by Sir Perceval's sister, went on their way.

This gentlewoman died soon after, weakened by loss of blood given to heal a lady. Before she died, she made this request and prophecy: "Fair brother Percivale... as soon as I am dead put me in a boat at the next haven, and let me go as adventure will lead me; and as soon as ye three come to the City of Sarras, there to achieve the Holy Grail, ye shall find me under a tower arrived, and there bury me in the spiritual place; for I say you so much, there Galahad shall be buried, ...

133. Ibid., pp. 249-250.

and ye also, in the same place".¹³⁴ Sir Perceval granted her request. After her soul had left her body, he placed in her hand a letter telling of her aid in their adventures and laid her on a barge, which he covered with black silk. Soon the wind bore the barge away.

Shortly after the death of Perceval's sister, Bors went to help a wounded knight; on the following day Perceval and Galahad parted. A voice had told the three knights that they were not to meet until adventure brought them to the maimed king.

Now Launcelot, directed by a vision to rise, take his armour, and enter the first ship he came upon, saw the barge bearing Sir Perceval's sister and entered it; whereupon "he felt the most sweetness that ever he felt, and he was fulfilled with all thing that he thought on or desired".¹³⁵ The next day he found the dead gentlewoman and read the letter telling of her adventures and her lineage. Sir Launcelot remained on the barge with the corpse more than a month and was sustained by the Holy Ghost. Later he was joined by Sir Galahad, who stayed with him until directed by a knight to continue the quest. As Galahad was preparing to depart, they heard a voice prophesy: "Think for to do well, for the one shall never see the other before the dreadful day of doom".¹³⁶

134. Ibid., p. 252.

135. Ibid., p. 254.

136. Ibid., p. 256.

After Galahad's departure, Launcelot "prayed to God that he might see some tidings of the Sangreal". Finally the ship brought him to a castle. Here he heard a voice say: "Launcelot, go out of this ship and enter into the castle, where thou shalt see a great part of thy desire".¹³⁷ As he passed a gate guarded by two lions, he drew his sword. Just then he was struck by a dwarf, the blow causing the sword to fall from his hands. He then heard a voice say: "O man of evil faith and poor belief, wherefore trowest thou more on thy harness than in thy Maker, for He might more avail thee than thine armour, in whose service that thou art set".¹³⁸ After thanking God for this reproof, he sheathed his sword, crossed his forehead, and passed the lions in safety, although "they made semblant to do him harm". At length he came to a chamber, the door of which he was unable to open. He heard sweet singing and, realizing that the Holy Grail was within, prayed to be shown "something of that" he sought. The door opened "and there came out a great clereness, that the house was as bright as all the torches of the world had been there".¹³⁹ A voice forbade him to enter, and he drew back. The record continues:

137. Ibid.

138. Ibid.

139. Ibid., p. 257.

"Then looked he up in the middes of the chamber, and saw a table of silver, and the holy vessel, covered with red samite, and many angels about it, whereof one held a candle of wax burning, and the other held a cross, and the ornaments of an altar. And before the holy vessel he saw a good man clothed as a priest. And it seemed that he was at the sacring of the masse. And it seemed to Launcelot that above the priest's hands were three men, whereof the two put the youngest by likeness between the priest's hands; and so he left it up right high, and it seemed to show so to the people".¹⁴⁰

The burden seeming too heavy for the priest, Launcelot went in to help; but, Malory continues:

"..when he came nigh he felt a breath, that him thought it was intermeddled with fire, which smote him so sore in the visage that him thought it brent his visage; and therewith he fell to the earth, and had no power to arise, as he that was so araged, that had lost the power of his body, and his hearing, and his seeing. Then felt he many hands about him, which took him up and bare him out of the chamber door, without any amending of his swoon, and left him there, seeming dead to all people".¹⁴¹

Launcelot remained in this state for days before he awaked. He was soon told that he would never see more of the Holy Grail than he had seen already. After he was clothed in a scarlet robe, he was recognized and was entertained by King Pelles, the lord of the castle, from whom he heard of Elaine's death. Just before his departure, they sat down to dine and were

140. Ibid.

141. Ibid., pp. 257-258.

provided "with all manner of meats" by the Holy Grail;
and the doors and windows shut without human interference,
"whereof they were all abashed, and none wist what to do".¹⁴²

After leaving Launcelot, Galahad "rode many journeyes
in vain". He began to perform wonders, however, when he
reached the abbey where King Mordraine was. This king had
long been blind, but his sight returned when Galahad came
where he was.¹⁴³ In a forest Galahad saw the well which
boiled. When he stuck his hand into it, "it burnt no more,
and the heat departed".¹⁴⁴ He had a similar experience in
the country of Gore at a tomb which had long been burning
and which was to continue to burn, according to the
brethren, until the fire was quenched by the knight of the
Round Table who surpassed all others. When Sir Galahad came
near the tomb, "the flaming failed, and the fire stanchied".¹⁴⁵
Then a voice said:

"Much are ye beholden to thank Our Lord,
the which hath given you a good hour,
that he may draw out the soules of earthly
pain, and to put them into the joys of
paradise. I am of your kindred, the which
hath dwelled in this heat this three hundred
four and fifty winter to be purged of the
sin that I did against Joseph of Aramathie".¹⁴⁶

After a long separation, Sir Galahad was joined by
Sir Percival and Sir Bors. They rode on to the castle of

142. Ibid., p. 259.

143. Ibid., p. 261.

144. Ibid., p. 262.

145. Ibid.

146. Ibid.

Carbonek, where they were joyfully received. Soon after their arrival Eliazar, King Pelles's son, brought them the broken sword with which Joseph had been wounded. Neither Bors nor Perceval was able to put it together; but, when Galahad put the pieces together, "they seemed that they had never been broken". The mended sword was given to Bors. Marvels began to happen:

"And a little afore even the sword arose great and marvellous, and was full of great heat that many men fell for dread. And anon alit a voice among them, and said: They that ought not to sit at the table of Jesu Christ arise, for now shall very knights be fed".¹⁴⁷

After this warning all left except King Pelles, his niece, Eliazar, and the three knights. They were soon joined by nine other knights from Gaul, Ireland, and Denmark, who told Galahad that they had "hied right much" to be with him at that table. A bed, on which lay a sick man wearing a golden crown, was brought into the room. He welcomed Sir Galahad and expressed the hope that the time had come when he might leave the world as had been promised him. At this point a voice said: "There be two among you that be not in the quest of the Sangreal, and therefore depart ye".¹⁴⁸

Warned by the voice, King Pelles and his son left. Among the miraculous events which took place before the group

147. Ibid., p. 263.

148. Ibid., p. 264.

which remained were the following:

"And therewithal beseemed them that there came a man, and four angels from heaven, clothed in likeness of a bishop, and had a cross in his hand; and these four angels bare him in a chair, and set him down before the table of silver whereupon the Sangreal was; and it seemed that he had in mides of his forehead letters the which said: See ye here Joseph, the first bishop of Christendom, the same which Our Lord succoured in the city of Sarras in the spiritual place. Then the knights marvelled, for that bishop was dead more than three hundred year tofore. O knights, said he, marvel not, for I was sometime an earthly man. With that they heard the chamber door open, and there they saw angels; and two bare candles of wax, and the third a towel, and the fourth a spear which bled marvellously, that three drops fell within a box which he held with his other hand. And they set the candles upon the table, and the third the towel upon the vessel, and the fourth the holy spear even upright upon the vessel. And then the bishop made semblant as though he would have gone to the sacring of the mass. And then he took an ubblye which was made in likeness of bread. And at the lifting up there came a figure in likeness of a child, and the visage was as red and as bright as any fire, and smote himself into the bread, so that they all saw it that the bread was formed of a fleshly man; and then he put it into the holy vessel again, and then he did that longed to a priest to do to a mass. And then he went to Galahad and kissed him, and bad him go and kiss his fellows; and so he did anon. Now, said he, servants of Jesu Christ, ye shall be fed afore this table with sweetmeats that never knights tasted. And when he had said, he vanished away. And they set them at the table in great dread, and made their prayers.

Then looked they and saw a man come out of the holy vessel, that had all the signs of the passion of Jesu Christ, bleeding all openly, and said: My knights, and my servants, and my true children, which be come out of deadly life into spiritual life, I will now no longer hide me from you, but ye shall see now a part of my secrets and of my hidden things: now hold and receive the high meat which ye have so much desired. Then took he himself the holy vessel and came to Galahad; and he kneeled down, and there he received his Saviour, and after him so received all his fellows; and they thought it so sweet that it was marvellous to tell. Then said he to Galahad: Son, wotest thou what I hold betwixt my hands? Nay, said he, but if ye will tell me. This is, said he, the holy dish wherein I ate the lamb on Sher-Thursday. And now hast thou seen that thou most desired to see, but yet hast thou not seen it so openly as thou shalt see it in the city of Sarras in the spiritual place. Therefore thou must go hence and bear with thee this holy vessel; for this night it shall depart from the realm of Logris, that it shall never be seen more here. And wotest thou wherefore? For he is not served nor worshipped to his right by them of this land, for they be turned to evil living; therefore I shall disinherit them of the honour which I have done them. And therefore go ye three to-morrow unto the sea, where ye shall find your ship ready, and with you take the sword with the strange girdles, and no more with you but Sir Percivale and Sir Bors. Also I will that ye take with you of the blood of this spear for to anoint the maimed king, both his legs and all his body, and he shall have his health. Sir, said Galahad, why shall not these other fellows go with us? For this cause: for right as I departed my apostles one here and another there, so I will that ye depart; and two of you shall die in my service, but one of you shall come again and tell tidings. Then gave he them his blessing and vanished away,....

"And Galahad went anon to the spear which lay

upon the table, and touched the blood with his fingers, and came after to the maimed king and anointed his legs. And therewith he clothed him anon, and start upon his feet out of his bed as an whole man, and thanked Our Lord that He had healed him".¹⁴⁹

A few days after these wonders befell, Bors, Perceval, and Galahad reached the shore and found the ship. On it were both the silver table and the Holy Grail covered with red samite. In answer to his prayer that he might pass from this world when he asked, a voice said: "Galahad, thou shalt have thy request; and when thou askest the death of thy body thou shalt have it, and then shalt thou find the life of the soul".¹⁵⁰ Perceval wanted to know why he made such a request. His answer follows:

"That shall I tell you, said Galahad; the other day when we saw a part of the adventures of the Sangreal I was in such a joy of heart, that I trow never man was that was earthly. And therefore I wot well, when my body is dead my soul shall be in great joy to see the blessed Trinity every day, and the Majesty of Our Lord, Jesu Christ".¹⁵¹

When the three knights reached Sarras, they found the boat bearing the corpse of Perceval's sister already there. The cure of the lame man whom they asked to help them move the table has been cited.¹⁵² When Estorause, king of the city, saw the knights, he asked where they were from and what

149. Ibid., pp. 264-266.

150. Ibid., p. 267.

151. Ibid.

152. See p. 22.

they brought on the silver table. They told him "the truth of the Sangreal, and the power which that God had set there". Then the king threw them into prison, where they were sustained by the Holy Grail sent by the Lord. Later this king became sick and, before he died, asked their mercy. The people were directed by a voice to choose the youngest of the three knights as their king, for he would maintain them well. Galahad was chosen.

It was the custom of Galahad, Perceval, and Bors, while they were in Sarrae, to worship every morning before the Holy Grail. Malory's account of the wonders accompanying its last appearance is given below:

"Now at the year's end, and the self day after Galahad had borne the crown of gold, he arose up early and his fellows, and came to the palace, and saw tofore them the holy vessel, and a man kneeling on his knees in likeness of a bishop, that had about him a great fellowship of angels as it had been Jesu Christ himself; and then he arose and began a mass of Our Lady. And when he came to the sacrament of the mass, and had done, anon he called Galahad, and said to him: Come forth the servant of Jesu Christ, and thou shalt see that thou hast much desired to see. And then he began to tremble right hard when the deadly flesh began to behold the spiritual things. Then he held up his hands toward heaven and said: Lord, I thank thee, for now I see that that hath been my desire many a day. Now, blessed Lord, would I not longer live, if it might please thee, Lord. And therewith the good man took Our Lord's body betwixt his hands, and proffered it to Galahad, and he re-

ceived it right gladly and meekly.
 Now wotest thou what I am? said the
 good man. Nay, said Galahad. I am
 Joseph of Aramathie, the which Our
 Lord hath sent here to thee to bear
 thee fellowship".¹⁵³

After Galahad had taken leave of his two companions and
 had prayed, they saw his soul borne up to heaven by a
 band of angels, and the Holy Vessel and the spear taken
 up by a hand. Since then there has never been a "man
 so hardy to say that he had seen the Sangreal".¹⁵⁴

Sir Perceval died fourteen months later and was
 buried near his sister and Sir Galahad. Bors alone
 returned to Camelot and related their experiences.
 Arthur had clerks record them in books, which were
 stored in chests at Salisbury.

Strange as these happenings may seem to the
 modern reader, they probably evoked little surprise in the
 fifteenth-century mind. Regarding the religious life of
 the people during the preceding century, Manning writes
 as follows:

"As the early Protestants were men of
 one book--their language borrowed from
 the Bible, their thought coloured by it--
 so the medieval Christian was a man of
 one event. The Passion of Christ was
 his daily meditation. It was not for
 nothing that he crossed himself a score
 of times each day. Over the whole
 medieval world lay the broad shadow of
 the Cross".¹⁵⁵

153. Le Morte D'Arthur, Vol. 2, p. 268.

154. Ibid., p. 269.

155. B. L. Manning, The People's Faith in the Time of Wyclif,
 p. 25.

The same author writes that the principle which guided the Church in its discrimination between religion and superstition was religious rather than rational. He continues:

"It was not because certain notions were (as we should say) more improbable than others that they were condemned. It was their effect on practical religion that the Church had in mind when it came to judge popular beliefs. If a particular 'superstition' tended to make people more careful about religious practices and Christian virtues, it was not only tolerated but blessed, whilst another which did no greater violence to human reason was condemned as degrading and impious and unreasonable, because it could not be brought within the recognized teaching and practice of the Church; or perhaps because it occasioned inconvenience to her ministers...."

"Because these stories glorified the sacrament the layman was encouraged to believe that the saying of a Mass could remove iron fetters from a knight's body, or sustain a miner who had been buried alive in a pit....that blindness would not strike the fortunate eyes which saw the Host carried to the sick....¹⁵⁶

"Unlike the power of the stars the power of the devil was not denied outright. However the clergy might denounce witchcraft, they had fatally weakened their position by admitting its reality. Some priests went so far as to lend themselves and their altars to this superstition; and, though the Church as a whole violently condemned the use of charms as a means of controlling the devil's power, it consistently taught that Divine assistance might be secured by a similar practice...The Cross and the Name of JESUS were especially effective..."

156. Ibid., pp. 78-79.

"Besides superstitions which reached as high and as deep as astrology and devil-worship there were in the fourteenth century many foolish customs and beliefs against which common sense and simple observation would have been a sufficient protection...There were professional magicians who transformed men and women, who visited Elfland, who cured and caused injuries by incantation and the use of waxen images".¹⁵⁷

Although Manning is describing conditions during the fourteenth century, and although he writes that in "the fifteenth century new interests broke in to disturb the contemplation",¹⁵⁸ yet evolution of thought is a slow process - one which admitted changes more reluctantly during the fifteenth century than during the present one.

157. Ibid., pp. 93-95.

158. Ibid., p. 25.

Chapter IV

The Marvellous in the Ballads and in other Medieval English Poetry

Every type of the marvellous in Malory's Le Morte D'Arthur considered in this study, with the possible exception of supernaturalism connected with the Holy Grail, is also to be found in medieval English poetry.¹

Let us first consider the magical aspects of the kingship. Several medieval poems dealing with the Arthurian legend contain counterparts of the astonishing phenomena found in Malory. In one metrical romance, "The Cheosing of Arthur", Arthur succeeds in drawing the sword from the stone after all other contestants have failed, as in Malory.² In another, The Death of Arthur, the hand appears above the water, catches Arthur's sword Excalibur, and brandishes it, just as it does in the prose romance.³ Not only in this poem, but also in Layamon's "The Passing of Arthur", we also have Arthur's journey to Avalon to be healed of his wounds, rather than a natural death. In the latter, reference is made to Merlin's prophecy regarding the king's return:

"That Arthur shall come again,
And once more o'er the Britons reign!"⁴

But it is not alone in the poems dealing with the Arthurian

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1. The study of medieval poetry has been limited to the English and Scottish Popular Ballads (Student's Cambridge Edition) and to the anthology, The Chief Middle English Poets, edited by Jessie L. Weston.
 2. The Chief Middle English Poets, p. 120.
 3. Ibid., p. 271.
 4. Ibid., p. 20.

legend that magic is associated with royalty. A most interesting proof of royalty is found in Havelok the Dane. The usurper Godard orders Havelok, the rightful heir of Denmark, drowned; but the servant trusted with the murder releases him from the sack, and later Havelok marries a king's daughter, who thinks him of low birth. That night after retiring, she sees a light emanating from his mouth. Her interpretations of its significance and an angel's explanation follows:

"Thought: 'What may this marvel mean?
He is high-born, so I ween,
He is high-born, or is dead!
On his neck, in gold so red,
Lo! a Cross, and in her ear
She an angel's voice doth hear,

" 'Goldboro, let thy mourning be,
Havelok, who hath wedded thee,
Is a King's son, and King's heir
As that Cross betokens fair".⁵

In a carol from the Hill Manuscript, Jesus talks to his mother when he is less than twelve days old.⁶ In The Cherry-Tree Carol (B)⁷ the unborn Saviour speaks when Joseph declines to pick a cherry for Mary, saying:

"Bow down, good cherry-tree,
to my mother's hand".

The tree obeys. Later Joseph hears an angel sing:

"This night shall be born
our heavenly king".

5. Ibid., p. 118.

6. Ibid., p. 365.

7. English and Scottish Popular Ballads, pp. 99-100.

The infant Jesus also foretells his resurrection in this ballad.

Therapeutic magic, as well as unusual notions attached to the passing of a king, is illustrated in a passage from Layamon's The Passing of Arthur, for Arthur is planning to go to Avalon to be healed by Arganté, queen of the elves:

"My wounds shall she handle and heal,
Turning my woe to weal,
For sound is he who hath quaffed
At her hand a healing draught".⁸

Examples of therapeutic magic are to be found frequently in Middle English poetry. In Tale XI of The Seven Sages of Rome, the emperor's wife, in an effort to warn her husband of the unfaithfulness of his seven masters, tells a story about Herod, whose blindness, Merlin claimed, was due to the bubbles in a boiling caldron deep under his bed. Merlin had said that Herod's infirmity would be removed if the bubbles were banished. Seven masters held responsible for the seven bubbles were slain; the bubbles disappeared. Merlin washed Herod's eyes, and his sight was recovered.⁹ In the metrical romance Syr Percyvalle of Galles, Sir Perceval's mother is restored to sanity by a potion which makes her sleep three days and

8. The Chief Middle English Poets, p. 20.

9. Ibid., pp. 283-286.

nights.¹⁰ In Amis and Amiloun we find that human blood is used to cure leprosy. An angel appears to Sir Amis in a dream three nights in succession, suggesting that the knight can rid his brother of leprosy if he will rise early Christmas morning, slay his two children, and anoint him with their blood. Sir Amis cuts their throats and the children die. The brother, Amiloun, grieves; but Amis says that, if God wills it, he may yet have his children back, and anoints Amiloun with their blood. The next day the leprosy has vanished, and the two children are found alive by their parents.¹¹ In the ballad Leesome Brand (A) the hero restores his dead lady and his dead son to life by dropping two drops of Saint Paul's blood upon the former, and one drop upon the latter.¹² The heroine in The Gay Goshawk (A), scheming to meet her lover to whom her father objects, asks to be buried in Scotland. She then drinks a "sleepy draught" which makes her sleep for nine days. Her family, believing her dead, take her body to Scotland. Her lover meets the funeral procession and asks to look at the corpse. The maiden, however, smiles at her lover and asks for bread and wine.¹³ Another ballad, The Queen of Scotland, contains an example of marvellous healing attributed to heaven.¹⁴

10. Ibid., p. 262.

11. Ibid., pp. 200-203.

12. English and Scottish Popular Ballads, p. 29.

13. Ibid., p. 203.

14. Ibid., p. 627.

In Young Ronald a ring given by a maiden to her lover illustrates both therapeutic magic and enchantment. It possesses a most remarkable characteristic:

"Likewise a ring, a royal thing,
The virtue it is gude;
If any o your men be hurt,
It soon will stem their blude".¹⁵

A second ring, also it soon will stem their¹⁶, will prevent its wearer from loss of blood.¹⁶ A counterpart of this ring is found in the ballad Kemp Owyne (A),¹⁷ and two others which closely resemble it in the metrical romances Sir Percyvelle of Galles¹⁸ and King Horn.¹⁹ In Ywain and Gawain Sir Ywain is lent a ring that will clothe him with invisibility.²⁰

A most interesting illustration of enchantment appears in another romance, The Sacrilegious Carollers. A priest, annoyed by carollers who dance while he prepares to conduct mass, prays for their punishment:

"And soon as the words from his lips had passed
The hands of the dancers were locked full fast,
That never a man, for spell, or wonder,
For a twelvemonth might part their clasp asunder".²¹

To select one illustration of enchantment from the ballads would be to neglect a score of others, for here enchantment is rife. The examples cited below indicate its prevalence. In King Arthur and King Cornwall, Sir Bredbeddle

15. Ibid., p. 630.

16. A chain in Bonny Bee Hom (A), ibid., p. 196, has the same effect.

17. Ibid., p. 60.

18. The Chief Middle English Poets, p. 257.

19. Ibid., p. 99.

20. Ibid., p. 230.

21. Ibid., p. 300.

conjures out of Burlew-beanie, a household demon, the charm which will enable one to ride King Cornwall's horse.²² A charm to insure a quiet grave is found in The Two Brothers (B):

" 'Lay my bible at my head', he says,
 'My chaunter at my feet,
 My bow and arrows by my side,²³
 And soundly I will sleep".²³

In Sir Hugh, or, The Jew's Daughter (N), the murdered boy asks his mother to prepare a similar charm for the same purpose.²⁴ The Gypsy Laddie (A) tells of a lady over whom gypsies "coost the glamor".²⁵ In Willie's Lady (A) the "Bellie Blind" helps Willie to undo the spell cast by his mother upon her daughter-in-law.²⁶ In Kemp Owyne (A) a spell cast by Isabel's step-mother is broken when Kemp Owyne kisses Isabel three times. She looks no longer like a savage beast but becomes a fair maiden.²⁷

Shape-shifting is a type of enchantment frequently found in the ballads. In The Marriage of Sir Gawain a horrible creature with an eye where her mouth should have been, also a victim of a step-mother's spell, becomes "faire and bright" when Sir Gawain marries her.²⁸ In The Laily Worm and the Machrel

22. English and Scottish Popular Ballads, p. 54.

23. Ibid., p. 92.

24. Ibid., p. 372.

25. Ibid., p. 483.

26. Ibid., pp. 10-11.

27. Ibid., p. 60.

28. Ibid., pp. 56-58.

of the Sea, the step-mother has changed her two step-children into the objects indicated by the title.²⁹ A "griesly ghost" in the ballad King Henry makes several demands upon the king, all of which are fulfilled. The king is rewarded the next morning by finding at his side a fair lady, in place of the ghost.³⁰ In The Twa Magicians a maid becomes, in turn, a turtle dove, an eel, a duck, a hare, a mare, a griddle, a ship, and a silken plaid, in vainly attempting to escape the unwelcome attentions of a blacksmith who proves as skillful a metamorphoser as she.³¹ In King Estmere an herb is used to effect a metamorphosis. It possesses remarkable properties:

"His color, which is whyte and redd,
It will make blacke and browne.

"His color, which is browne and blacke,
Itt will make redd and whyte;
That sworde is not in all Englande
Upon his coate will byte".³²

In another ballad, Allison Gross, the spell of a witch who turned a mortal into a worm, because he refused to be her "lemman", is undone by the queen of the fairies.³³

Fairy lovers, or fairy mistresses, or elves appear in several ballads, The Elfin Knight (A), Lady Isabel and the Elf-Knight (A), King Orfeo (A), and Sir Cawline,³⁴ as well

29. Ibid., pp. 62-63.
30. Ibid., pp. 58-59.

31. Ibid., pp. 77-78.

32. Ibid., p. 113.

33. Ibid., p. 62.

34. Cf. English and Scottish Popular Ballads.

as in the romance Sir Launfal.³⁵ In Sir Launfal the knight goes to "Faërie"; mortals also visit fairyland, or elfland, in the following ballads: Thomas Rymer, (A) and (C), The Wee Wee Man (A), and The Queen of Elfan's Nourice.³⁶

Ghosts, like fairies and elves, play a conspicuous part in the ballads. The kiss of a ghost is said to be fatal. In The Twa Brothers (B), Lady Margaret harps her lover from the grave and asks for a kiss, but he refuses, saying:

"If you get one kiss of my ruby lips,
Your days will not be long".³⁷

In two other ballads, Sweet William's Ghost, (A) and (B),³⁸ and The Unquiet Grave (A),³⁹ ghosts refuse to kiss their loved ones for the same reason.

It is interesting to note that rings serve not only as instruments of enchantment, but also as instruments of divination. In Hind Horn, (A) and (G), Jean gives her lover a ring which will grow pale when her love is gone. One day he notices that it is pale and later finds that Jean has married another.⁴⁰ A ring in Bonny Bee Hom (A) serves two purposes:

"But gin this ring shoud fade or fail,
Or the stone shoud change its hue,

35. The Chief Middle English Poets, pp. 204-216.

36. Cf. English and Scottish Popular Ballads.

37. Ibid., p. 92.

38. Ibid., pp. 165-166.

39. Ibid., p. 167.

40. Ibid., pp. 31-33.

Be sure your love is dead and gone,
Or she has proved untrue".⁴¹

In Lamkin (B) a lord begins to fear for his lady's safety because the rings on his fingers have "burst in twain". He returns home and finds his lady and his son dead.⁴² In The Boy and the Mantle a mantle, a knife, and a drinking horn serve as chastity tests.⁴³ In Sir Patrick Spens, (A), (B), and (C), the new moon with the old moon in her arms is regarded as a dangerous portent.⁴⁴ The stumbling of the lord's horse in Lord Derwentwater (A) is believed to be a sign that its master will not come home alive.⁴⁵

Two uncanny examples of divination are found in another ballad, Young Hunting (A). A bird gives those who are searching for the young knight's body the following advice:

"Leave off your ducking on the day,
And duck upon the night;
Wherever that sakeless knight lys slain,
The candels will shine bright".⁴⁶

She who murdered the knight puts the blame upon another who is thrown into a bonfire, which, however, does her no harm. The guilty woman is then put into it and burns "like hoky-gren".

But examples of divination are not confined to the ballads. Reference is made to three of Merlin's prophecies in Layamon's The Passing of Arthur.⁴⁷ In one of the saint's legends, The Life of Saint Dunstan, a taper in the hand of the

41. Ibid., p. 196.
42. Ibid., pp. 198-199.
43. Ibid., pp. 47-49.
44. Ibid., pp. 104-105.
45. Ibid., p. 494.
46. Ibid., p. 140.
47. The Chief Middle English Poets, pp. 18-20.

saint's mother bursts into flame after those of the whole group have gone out. From it the extinguished tapers are lighted, the conclusion being that the light is sent by God to foretell that the unborn saint's "name should shed a light on English earth". In this same poem the Archbishop Odo predicts that he will be succeeded by Saint Dunstan, saying that God is the source of his information.⁴⁸ In The Death of Saint Thomas a Becket Jerusalem hears of Thomas's martyrdom within a fortnight from a monk who returns to earth after having died and gone to heaven.⁴⁹ Three other legendary poems, Saint Brandan, Saint Cecilia, and Placidus (Saint Eustace), as well as Tale XI of The Seven Sages of Rome, also contain prophecies.⁵⁰

In Middle English poetry, as in Malory, dreams are commonly regarded as premonitory. The following ballads, Sheath and Knife (E), Sir Aldingar (A), Fair Margaret and Sweet William, (A) and (B), Young Johnstone (B), Willie and Earl Richard's Daughter (A), The Battle of Otterburn (C), Sir John Butler, Captain Car, or, Edom O Gordon (A), The Braes o Yarrow, (A) and (E), and Lord Livingston,⁵¹ as well as the historical poem Layamon's The Passing of Arthur and the two metrical romances King Horn and Amis and Amiloun⁵² -- all contain examples of oneiromancy.

48. Ibid., pp. 37-39.

49. Ibid., p. 53.

50. Cf. The Chief Middle English Poets.

51. Cf. English and Scottish Popular Ballads.

52. Cf. The Chief Middle English Poets.

At the beginning of this chapter it was stated that every type of the marvellous in Malory's Le Morte D'Arthur considered in this study, with the possible exception of supernaturalism connected with the Holy Grail, is also to be found in medieval English poetry. Although none of the supernaturalism in the poetry studied is connected with the search for the Holy Grail, yet supernaturalism is evident, especially in those poems dealing with the Virgin and with the lives of the saints. Several wonders occur in the ballad Dives and Lazarus. Dives sends his men to drive the beggar away, but they are powerless; the dogs sent to bite him are even less successful, for they lick away his sores. At Lazarus's death two angels come to guide his soul into heaven; when Dives dies, two serpents come to guide his soul into hell, from which place he calls upon Lazarus to give him water to quench his "flaming thirst".⁵³ In Brown Robyn's Confession lots are cast and the ship's master is judged guilty. He confesses his sine and is thrown overboard, tied to a plank. "Our Blessed Lady" comes to him and asks whether he would rather return to his men or go "to the high heavens" with her young son and her. He chooses the latter.⁵⁴ In The Wife of Usher's Well (C), Jesus goes to Scotland to see what a widow who has been calling upon him wants. In response to

53. English and Scottish Popular Ballads, p. 102.

54. Ibid., p. 103.

her request he sends her three sons back from the dead to visit her.⁵⁵

Supernaturalism abounds in those poems dealing with the lives of the saints. In The Life of Saint Dunstan the devil visits the smithy where the saint is at work and has his nose pulled. On one occasion, as Saint Dunstan prays in a place apart, he sees his dead mother and father enjoying heavenly bliss; another time, during the night as he lies in bed, he beholds "the joy of Heaven" and hears the angels sing. On another occasion as he sits thinking of heaven, the harp on the wall begins "to harp a joyous strain" which "men yet sing in Holy Church".⁵⁶ The remarkable experiences of a saint and his companions in their search for the Promised Land are recorded in another poem, Saint Brandan.⁵⁷ In Saint Cecilia an angel brings crowns for the saint and her husband.⁵⁸ In Placidus (Saint Eustace), a hart which the saint has followed becomes Christ. Later the saint and his family are thrown into prison with beasts; they suffer no harm. They are then put into bowls and burned to death, but turn their souls toward heaven and experience no pain.⁵⁹

55. Ibid., p. 169.

56. The Chief Middle English Poets, pp. 38-41.

57. Ibid., pp. 58-72.

58. Ibid., p. 75.

59. Ibid., pp. 78-83.

Examples of supernaturalism are also to be found in various other Middle English poems. In the metrical romance Amis and Amiloun a voice from heaven tells Sir Amiloun that he will be stricken with leprosy if he takes Sir Amis's part in a combat.⁶⁰ The following lines from another romance, Richard Coeur de Lion, describe a miracle which befel King Henry's wife while she was attending mass.

"By the hand she held anon
Her daughter and her young son, John,
Thro' the roof she took her flight
Openly, in all men's sight,
From the air John fell to ground,
Brake his thigh there in that stound.
With her daughter fled the queen,
Never more by men was seen."⁶¹

In The Five Joys of the Virgin Mary Mary sees her Son taken up to heaven.⁶² She is described as weeping tears of blood at the crucifixion in another religious poem, A Song on the Passion.⁶³ In A Miracle of Our Lady the corpse of a murdered child sings "Salve Sancta Parens" after the Mass of Requiem has been sung.⁶⁴

The illustrations cited indicate that there is a marked resemblance between the marvellous in Malory and the marvellous in medieval English poetry; and that, even though in the poetry considered there is no supernaturalism connected with the Holy Grail, supernaturalism of a similar nature

60. Ibid., p. 189.

61. Ibid., pp. 125-126.

62. Ibid., p. 370.

63. Ibid., p. 347.

64. Ibid., p. 357.

is to be found in the poetry of the time, especially in those poems dealing with the Virgin and with the lives of the saints.

Numerous as the points of resemblance between the marvellous in Malory and the marvellous in Middle English poetry are, the differences between them should not be overlooked.

One of the most striking, although it is of degree rather than of kind, is the greater variety of supernatural creatures to be found in the latter. Neither fairy queens, elfin knights, "silgies", mermaids, nor "Bellie Blinds" haunt the pages of Le Morte D'Arthur, but all of these appear in the ballads. Animals⁶⁵ gifted with the power of speech are also to be found in several ballads, The Three Ravens, The Twa Corbies, The Broomfield Hill, (A) and (B), The Garmal and the Crane, and The Bonny Birdy⁶⁶ among them, as well as in the metrical tales The Fox and the Wolf and The Owl and Nightingale.⁶⁷ In St. Stephen and Herod the roasted cock announces Christ's nativity.⁶⁸ Not one talking animal appears in Le Morte D'Arthur.⁶⁹

Another theme found nowhere in Le Morte D'Arthur but of common occurrence in the ballads is the growth of plants,

65. Inanimate objects are given the power of speech in two ballads in this collection: bedclothes speak in Gil Brenton (A); violin strings made of the veins of a murdered girl in The Twa Sisters (A).

66. Cf. English and Scottish Popular Ballads.

67. Cf. The Chief Middle English Poets.

68. English and Scottish Popular Ballads, p. 41.

69. The appearance of two birds which speak to Sir Bors in a vision that he has while he sleeps may possibly be regarded as an exception (cf. Le Morte D'Arthur, Vol. 2, p. 222).

usually a birch and a brier, from the graves of dead lovers. The following lines are taken from Lord Thomas and Fair Annet (A), but a similar idea is expressed in Fair Janet (A), The Lass of Roch Royal (A), and Prince Robert, (A) and (B).

"Lord Thomas was buried without kirkwa,
Fair Annet within the quiere,
And o the tane thair grew a birk,
The other a bonny briere.

"And ay they grew, and ay they threw,
As they wad faine be neare;
And by this ye may ken right weil
They were twa luvvers deare."⁷⁰

A rose from the maiden's grave and a brier from the knight's form a lover's knot in Earl Brand (B) and in Lady Alice (C).

It is not surprising that the ballads exhibit a greater variety of supernatural beings than Le Morte D'Arthur. Communal origin and oral transmission encouraged the entrance of peasant folklore⁷¹ into many ballads for centuries after Malory's Le Morte D'Arthur was a printed book.

70. English and Scottish Popular Ballads, p. 153.

71. For a treatment of ballad folklore, cf. Wimberly's Folklore in the English and Scottish Ballads.

Chapter V

Survivals of the Types of the Marvellous in Le Morte D'Arthur in Modern Life

The last chapter of magic is yet unwritten. The types of magic found in Malory, with the exception of supernaturalism connected with the Holy Grail, existed in primitive society, flourished during the Middle Ages, and have their survivals in modern life.

Perhaps the type of magic which is most rapidly disappearing is that which was associated with royalty. As late as the eighteenth century the belief that scrofula could be cured by the king's touch survived.¹ But no longer is it true that "There's such divinity doth hedge a king".² The World War gave the divine right of kings its death blow.

Therapeutic magic continues to survive. Where is the person of Celtic or Southern ancestry who has not heard of a forbear, or at least of a friend of a forbear, who was willing to wear red flannel in an effort to get rid of rheumatism; or to carry a potato around in his pocket for the same purpose; or to wear on a string around his neck a bag of asafoetida to ward off contagious disease (the odor probably repelled the carrier); or a nutmeg through which a hole had been bored to get rid of boils? In an article on

1. Frazer, Psyche's Task, p. 18.

2. Shakespeare, Hamlet, Act IV, Scene 5.

Mackenzie's The Infancy of Medicine the Edinburgh Review makes this statement:

"Medicine and magic constitute the oldest partnership in the world, and the partnership has by no means been dissolved even yet. But it is to the credit of modern medicine that it is now engaged in a serious and strenuous effort to set up in business for itself and to accept nothing as true which it cannot prove by the accepted methods of science".³

But the scientific spirit has not yet permeated the whole of society; it has scarcely penetrated the top soil. A teacher of the writer's acquaintance has great faith in the efficacy of a piece of paper worn next to the skin to prevent sea-sickness. Another acquaintance, an English business woman who was bothered by a lame knee, sought the services of a water diviner whom some one had recommended, in order to obtain relief. Vestiges of the Malayan Poyang who combines the offices of priest, physician, and sorcerer survive in the divine healer.

Remnants of enchantment can be found around every corner. In a recent novel portraying the life of the Southern negro since the Civil War, "Daddy Cudjoe", whose powers are strongly suggestive of those of the savage medicine man, concocts a charm for "Si May"; it is destined to bring back her husband, who has been lured away by Cinder. A drop of blood from her right hand, "de hand what catches an' holds",⁴

3. Edinburgh Review, Vol. 247, p. 75, Jan., 1928.

4. Peterkin, Scarlet Sister Mary, p. 124.

is the first ingredient. A negro servant, within the lifetime of the writer, has been known to sleep with a broom under her cot to keep the witches away. The writer has been advised not to shake a table cloth out of doors after nightfall, the tradition being that to do so would banish one's luck; and not to bring a garden tool through the house, since to do so would bring bad luck. The utilitarian value of such superstitions as these last two is apparent.

Several examples of enchantment cited in Chapter III seem, at first sight, simply examples of crude magic, but upon further consideration, they are highly suggestive of hypnotism. Merlin's causing Pellinore to fall to the earth asleep,⁵ his preventing the same knight from seeing Arthur,⁶ Nimue's causing the sword to fall from Sir Accolon's hand,⁷ the spells cast by her upon Sir Pelleas and Lady Ettard,⁸ as well as those cast upon the sleeping Launcelot by Morgan le Fay⁹ and Dame Brisen¹⁰ - all such achievements are within the range of the hypnotist's power. Perhaps it is too far-fetched to claim for hypnotism the power of turning horse and man to rock,¹¹ especially since the sorceress turned herself

5. Le Morte D'Arthur, Vol. 1, p. 42.

6. Ibid., p. 44.

7. Ibid., p. 103.

8. Ibid., pp. 122-123.

9. Ibid., p. 155.

10. Le Morte D'Arthur, Vol. 2, p. 150.

11. Le Morte D'Arthur, Vol. 1, p. 109.

into this medium along with her attendants and horses,¹² but rigidity is a characteristic of the cataleptic state of hypnosis; and Arthur was able to recognize his sister and one knight from another even while they were petrified.

Sir Pelleas's love for Lady Ettard was replaced by hatred; and Lady Ettard's hatred was succeeded by love, as

12. Rosita Forbes (of. "Black and White Magic", Fortnightly Review, Vol. 123, pp. 45-46, Jan., 1928) writes as follows regarding the possibility of group hypnotism:

"Mass hypnotism is most remarkable, yet it undoubtedly must be within the power of primitive magicians, because a score of villagers will bear witness to having seen the phenomena at the same time. In Papua I was induced to assist at such a séance. It took place on the beach a very short distance from the semi-civilization of Port Moresby....

"On this occasion the wizard was a ghastly figure, adding a rattle of bones to the grotesqueness of whitewash and nostrils split by reeds. He drew hieroglyphics, whirled like a top amidst a shrieked incantation, performed sufficient hocus-pocus to induce receptivity among the watchers, and then, on the top of all this nonsense, made each one of us see what appeared to be a genuine apparition. An enormous inchoate figure loomed between us. It was monstrous in size, and its outline gradually solidified till it represented what would be the local idea of a deity, but the proof that this was nothing more than a projection of the magician's mind occurred to us afterwards. There had been four Europeans present, and to prevent trickery we had sat at different points of the circle, so that we ought, logically, to have seen different aspects of the apparition. But we didn't. To each of us the thing appeared absolutely full face, as flat as a figure on a screen, and, as far as our interpreter could discover later on, each native had seen exactly what we saw".

a result of Nimue's spell.¹³ Such phenomena can easily be explained by post-hypnotic suggestion.

The conviction of the damsel who came to Arthur's court, girt with a sword from which she could not be released except by a knight who was "a passing good man of his hands and of his deeds, and without villainy or treachery, and without treason",¹⁴ may also be attributed to the same power. Her subsequent release by Balin,¹⁵ a poorly arrayed ex-prisoner, after Arthur and a number of his barons had failed to withdraw the sword from its sheath, suggests Adler's compensation for inferiority theory.

It is also quite possible to explain the remarkable feature of Gawaine's power¹⁶ which trebled during the morning and was the gift of a holy man, as a result of post-hypnotic suggestion.

The same explanation might be advanced for King Meliodas's action. A sorceress had loved him for a long time in vain. At length "by an enchantment she made him chase an hart by himself alone till that he came to an old castle, and there anon he was taken prisoner by the lady that him loved".¹⁷

Enough of survivals of enchantment and modern explanations of its appearances in Malory. What vestiges of

13. Le Morte D'Arthur, Vol. 1, pp. 122-123.

14. Ibid., p. 46.

15. Ibid., p. 48.

16. Le Morte D'Arthur, Vol. 2, p. 375.

17. Le Morte D'Arthur, Vol. 1, p. 239.

divination remain?

There are yet those who are willing to cross a gypsy's palm with silver in the hope of seeing the future unroll. The patronage of palmists and mediums continues. Interest in the ouija board not a great many years ago amounted to a craze. Perhaps half a century hence present-day intelligence and personality tests will be regarded as pseudo-scientific means of prognostication as the crystal ball and tea leaves are today.

Who could blame a great uncle from clinging to the belief that to dream of losing a tooth foretold the death of a member of the family when, on the very morning following his dream, a messenger had arrived bringing the news of his mother's death?

In Biblical times, as in medieval times, dreams were thought to reveal the future; today they are thought to reveal more about the past and the present than is immediately evident. The dream is invaluable to the psychoanalyst in determining the cause of a neurosis. It has been described as "a perfect mechanism", which upon analysis "is found to contain the fulfilment of a wish"; and which "always treats of the inmost thoughts of personality and for that reason gives us the best access to the unconscious".¹⁸

18. A. A. Brill, Psychoanalysis, p. 34.

Morton Prince is of the opinion "that a dream may be...the expression of antecedent doubts, scruples, anxieties, etc., or may be an answer to an unsolved problem",¹⁹ as well as the fulfillment of a wish.

Surely it was no more difficult for the man living in ancient or even in medieval times to believe that a dream foretold the future, than it is for one living in the twentieth century to accept some of the elaborate dream interpretations of the psychoanalyst.

Of all the types of the marvellous in Malory, supernaturalism connected with the Holy Grail was the most prominent; so today religious supernaturalism is the most prominent survival. It may even be said to flourish.²⁰ According to James, "Hindus, Buddhists, Mohammedans, and Christians all have cultivated" what he calls the "cosmic or mystic consciousness".²¹ St. John and St. Paul of the early Christian church,

19. Morton Prince, The Unconscious, p. 196.

20. This statement of W. K. Wright's (of. A Student's Philosophy of Religion, p. 53) probably contains an explanation: "Magic persists longer in religion than in other fields of organized human activity just because man is more reluctant to apply critical reasoning to religion, feeling that it is something sacred and taboo to careful investigation and inquiry". J. H. Robinson (of. The Mind in the Making, p. 82) expresses the following opinion: "In general, those ideas which are still almost universally accepted in regard to man's nature, his proper conduct, and his relations to God and his fellows are far more ancient and far less critical than those which have to do with the movement of the stars, the stratification of the rocks and the life of plants and animals".

21. William James, The Varieties of Religious Experience, pp. 400-401.

St. Francis of Assisi of the twelfth century, Saint Theresa of the sixteenth, and George Fox, founder of the Quaker sect, of the seventeenth - all of these saw visions, a category into which a great number of the marvellous adventures experienced by Sir Launcelot, Sir Bors, Sir Perceval, and Sir Galahad, in their search for the Holy Grail, fall. It will be remembered that one of the marvels witnessed by these three knights at the castle of Carbonek was the entrance of a figure, "in likeness of a child", into the bread when it was lifted by the bishop; "so that they all saw it that the bread was formed of a fleshly man".²² One branch of the Christian church, the Roman Catholic, today believes that the eucharist becomes the body of Christ when it is elevated at the mass. Only last week at Albert Hall, where ten thousand people - according to newspaper report - were attending a memorial service which had been arranged by London spiritualists societies in honor of Sir Conan Doyle, a clairvoyant reports having seen the famous author and spiritualist and also having received a message from him, delivered in his natural voice.

Modern science does not deny the appearance of

22. See p. 78.

visions; psychologists limit their appearance, however, to neurotic personalities. The psychologist's limitation may yet be removed in the laboratory of psychic research.²³ Who can say?

My thesis is that the marvellous in Malory appears, for the most part, in one of the following forms, magical aspects of the kingship, therapeutic magic, enchantment, divination, oneiromancy, or supernaturalism connected with the Holy Grail; that these forms, with the exception of supernaturalism connected with the Holy Grail, existed in primitive society, flourished in the Middle Ages, and survive in modern life; and that religious supernaturalism, similar to that connected with the Holy Grail, appeared in primitive society, flourished in the Middle Ages, and survives in modern life. It is interesting to note that the marvellous events in Malory occur largely in connection with man's efforts to control nature or to propitiate God; and that these efforts represent stages in the development of science and religion. Perhaps some of our efforts four centuries hence will seem equally marvellous!

23. The establishment of such a laboratory is included in the plans for Atlantic University, which is to open at Virginia Beach, Virginia, in the autumn of 1930.

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